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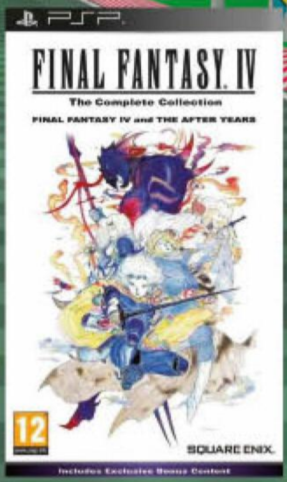

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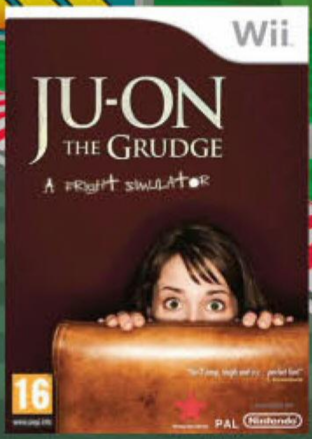

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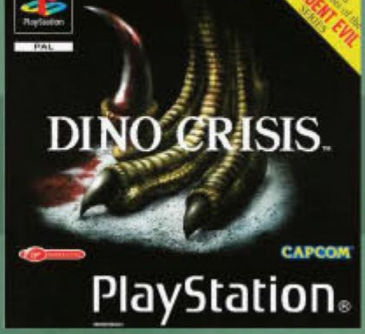

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Welcome

GAME OF THE MONTH
Wasteland 3
BEST GAME PRESIDENT
President Huffman
(Destroy All Humans!)

We can take big franchises for granted – after all Call Of Duty comes around every year. This year's is somehing different; the trailer opens with the message "footage taken on PlayStation 5". Our cover game, Call Of Duty: Black Ops – Cold War is a cross-gen release. Coming to PS4 and PS5, it's pushing the boundaries of what current hardware can do and embracing what the next generation will do. Read our exclusive interview on p48.

There's more big franchise news this issue too, as Rocksteady finally reveals its Suicide Squad game (p10) and WB Games Montréal debuts Gotham Knights, its co-op-focussed Batman Family action RPG (p6).

Looking to the future we get to see Godfall in action (p34), speak to the Observer: System Redux developer (p40), and Sony's devs explain why DualSense will change how we play games (p54).

This is an exciting time for PlayStation; don't take a moment of it for granted.

> "PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT CURRENT HARDWARE CAN DO AND EMBRACING WHAT THE NEXT GEN WILL DO."

Ian

Ian Dean
EDITOR
opm@futurenet.com
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THIS MONTH'S DOUBLE AGENTS

Oscar Taylor-Kent
GAMES EDITOR

Our Marvel's Avengers reviewer (p66) can't get enough of Ms. Marvel, but is it enough to earn an embiggened score?

GAME OF THE MONTH
Marvel's Avengers
BEST GAME PRESIDENT
Himself (Saint's Row IV)

Jess Kinghorn
STAFF WRITER

Getting handsy with hundreds of players online, Jess speaks to Fall Guys' dev (p58) to see what's next. She's a mean bean.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Control – AWE
BEST GAME PRESIDENT
Adam Benford (RE6)

Miriam McDonald
OPERATIONS EDITOR

Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga (p14) catches our prod's eye this issue: it's Luke-ing good.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Hypnospace Outlaw
BEST GAME PRESIDENT
Abraham Lincoln
(Fight Club)

Milford Coppock
MANAGING ART EDITOR

Milf has a fondness for classic games. Ratchet & Clank (p24) ticks that box; they're the nuts and bolts of PlayStation life.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Marvel's Avengers
BEST GAME PRESIDENT
Solidus Snake (MGS2)

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The caped crusader's gone – meet the heroes who'll work together to fill his bat-boots.

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A look at the armour and weapons we'll be mixing and matching when PS5 launches.

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Discover what haptic feedback and adaptive triggers will do for the next gen's games.

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Ms Marvel takes the lead as the team finally reassemble on PS4, but is it marvellous?

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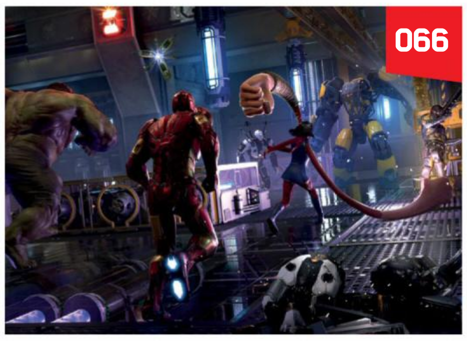

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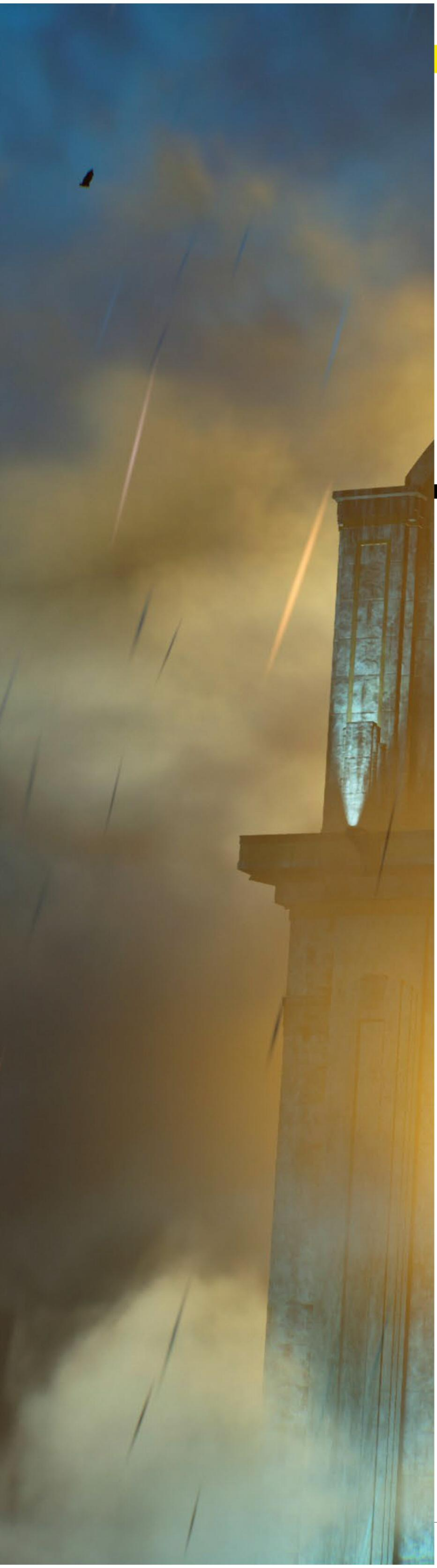
> “WE WANTED HEROES WHO EMBODIED DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE BAT-FAMILY.”

Batgirl's in the Belfry as she puts together Gotham City's newest superteam.



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The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

Gotham Knights keeps it all in the family

WB Montréal moves on from Arkham with a sensational co-op superteam

01

If we've learned anything from comic books, it's if you can do it yourself, you can do it with superfriends. That's the driving force behind WB Games Montréal's Gotham Knights. Though not set in the same universe as the Batman: Arkham series, the game is aping much of what made that trilogy so outstanding. The big difference? Gotham Knights is embracing the action RPG trend to tell a Gotham-set story in a new way.

Gotham Knights' creative director Patrick Redding says: "One of our goals was to really tap into aspects of the Batman universe that hadn't necessarily had exposure yet in games. We drew on the idea of the Batman Family, really as a core element of that. Family, in general, has become a theme in this game."

Commissioner Jim Gordon's dead. Batman's dead, killed in an explosion. Into the vacuum step Batgirl, Robin, Nightwing, and Red Hood to fight crime, uncover the dark, historical mysteries of Gotham City, and earn XP for defeating petty criminals.

We're told you can switch characters whenever you like, but you must do it at the Belfry. "That's your home base," clarifies Redding, who reveals each character will have their own upgrade paths and story arc to play through, as well as the main narrative involving criminal organisation The Court Of Owls.

TWEET-TWO

Co-op is drop-in drop-out, and, uniquely, it's untethered. "So you can be in two completely different parts of the city, if you wanted, and join at some point to take on a specific mission." It means you and a friend can exist in the same Gotham but take on different quests.

Redding elaborates: "You don't want to create this whole Gotham City ecosystem, and then tell a co-op teammate that you have to stay within 20 metres of your post, or you're going to teleport somewhere. I think that people understand that

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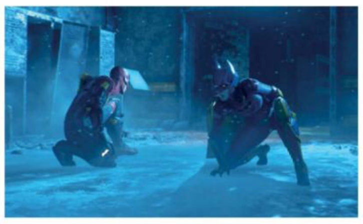


CO-OP COMBO
Classic Arkham combat goes co-op: characters now have complementary combos. We see Batgirl grapple and kick-flip an enemy into the air before Robin leap-smashes him into the ground with his trademark quarterstaff.

'open world' has a certain dynamic to it, and especially if you're on these fast-moving Batcycles, or you're traversing using your traversal abilities."

The team are also taking the brave step of allowing us to play as any character in any co-op match-up, meaning there could be two variants of Batgirl roaming Gotham.

GOTHAM GREATS

Each character has a distinct combat and visual style, and you'll be able to customise both in the game. "We're building distinct ability trees for each character," confirms Redding, who also reveals everything is locked into the DNA of the heroes and their connection to Batman. You can upgrade suit styles that can impact on combat, but you'll never over-mod your character as you would in a GAAS.

"The idea is that you can use your style, you can use your tools, and the game will respect that and sort of valorise it by giving you great opportunities," shares Redding, who tells us you can approach combat however you wish, stealthily or not, whether in the open world or a main story mission.

Combat is different to the Arkham games, though that series' DNA is still evident – after all, these heroes were all trained by Batman. The closest to ol' Bats looks to be Batgirl, her blend of jiu-jitsu, kickboxing, and capoeira corresponding nicely to the rhythmic counter-attack combat of the *other* series. Nightwing is Batgirl-like in his use of dual Escrima sticks, and Red Hood brings an arsenal of weaponry, while Robin is the go-to stealth class. In action the boy wonder uses invisibility tech to sneak up on enemies and traverse the city by using the Justice League's satellite to teleport to targeted areas. It calls for a suspension of belief that's not required when playing as Batgirl, who can swing across rooftops on a familiar Bat-grapple or take to the streets on her Batcycle.

CITY LIMITLESS

Gotham City itself is as big a character as ever, and has its own ecosystem. "I think what was important for us, especially because this is a new guard of heroes, they don't have a friendly GCPD. They have a GCPD that's post-Jim Gordon, that's hostile to mass vigilantes running around," says Redding. He explains crime is rife as word spreads of Batman's demise. There are also citizens milling about Gotham.

> “ WE WENT FOR A MYSTERY SORT OF STRUCTURE FOR OUR MAIN STORY. ”

"It's a city that's alive," states Redding. "It has people going about their business. And obviously that creates an ecosystem that the player has to drop themselves into in order to fight crime."

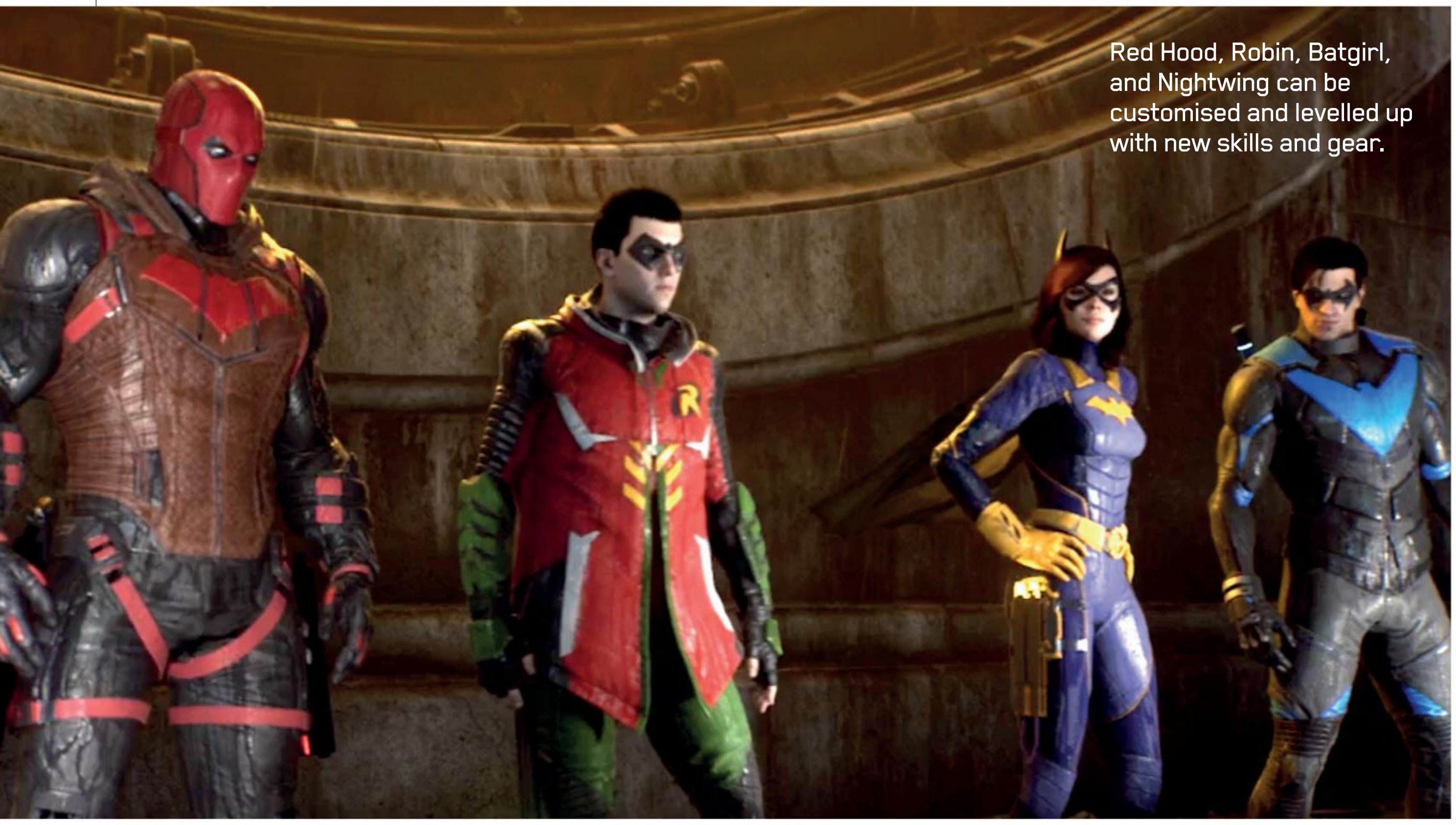
He then tells us those citizens will see your heroes differently as the game progresses.

This sense of development appears to be central to the game as a whole, with Redding revealing the nature of the mysterious Court Of Owls and its influence on Gotham is a story we'll need to piece together for ourselves.

Redding says: "The reason we went for a mystery sort of structure for our main story is that it isn't something that you just grind through over a weekend. It's something where you uncover a piece of it, and you get a chance to explore that piece. And it has implications, and it changes the world. And then you have to kind of go and do the detective legwork in order to get access to what that next piece is going to be.

"So it really is a mystery arc. And so with the Court, the things start out as one thing, and then they definitely end up somewhere else."

* Gotham Knights will release on PS4 and PS5 in 2021. @OPM_UK with your views.

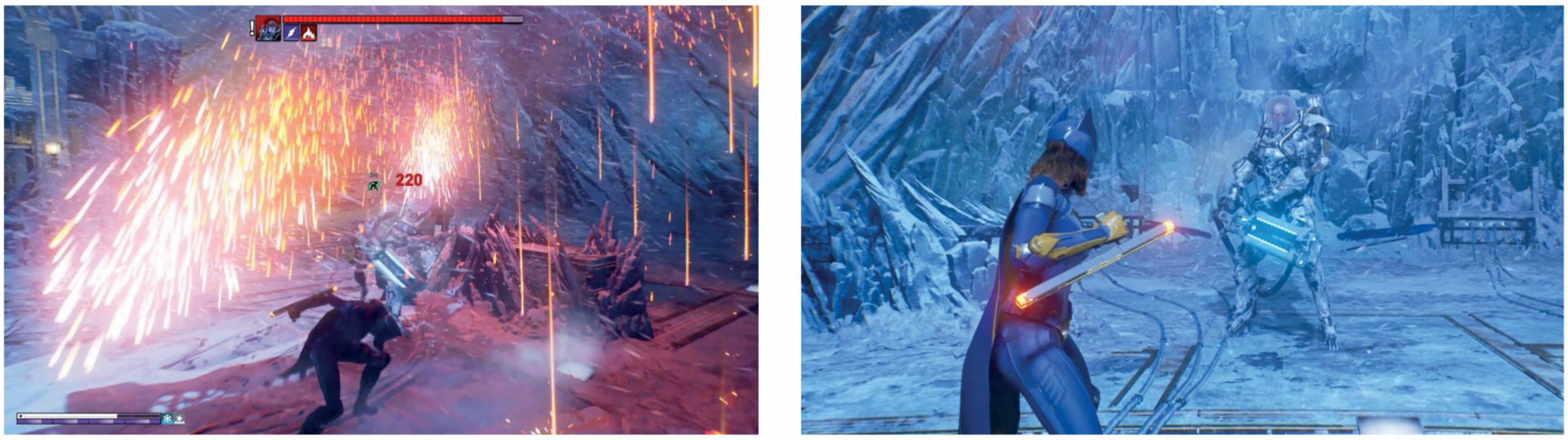


Red Hood, Robin, Batgirl, and Nightwing can be customised and levelled up with new skills and gear.

The streets of Gotham are much busier than those of Arkham City.

Batgirl employs a familiar blend of stealth and melee combat.

Each character has their own story arc, and their outfits can be customised.



Batgirl has area affect attacks to complement her standard rhythm-based melee combos. In the demo a second player joins the fight as Robin.

Mr Freeze's attacks and abilities will differ depending on your character's level.

How can Superman be killed? That's the question Rocksteady hopes to answer.

Suicide Squad take on PlayStation 5

The Arkhamverse expands to Metropolis for the next gen

02

Rocksteady Studios is ditching the cowl for its long-in-development new game. Suicide Squad: Kill The Justice League may be set in the same universe as the developer's Batman: Arkham series but we'll be playing as Harley Quinn, King Shark, Deadshot, and Captain Boomerang in this all-new game.

Heading to PlayStation 5 in 2022, this game puts four-player co-op up front, though you can play the entire story campaign solo and hot-swap between the four infamous team members.

Protagonist and antagonist Amanda Waller has planted explosives in the heads of our unlikely heroes; DC's super villains reluctantly become part of Waller's secretive Task Force X. We anticipate all is not what it seems.

"This is a continuation of the Arkhamverse. You'll see a lot of the through-threads and the storylines of those games come to fruition in this game," says Sefton Hill, co-founder and game director at Rocksteady Games, during Suicide Squad's DC FanDome reveal.

> “IT'S ABOUT THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE CHARACTERS.”

The game features the DNA of the metroidvania-inspired Batman trilogy but with new narrative and gameplay innovations to bring Rocksteady's ideas up to date.

Rocksteady has chosen the Suicide Squad because it has a history of character-led gameplay. "It's all about that heart and soul of the characters that we want to bring to life," explains Hill. "Suicide Squad really spoke to us because of how fascinating these flawed characters are, and the fact it's [about] fusing these characters together. When you're creating a game you're building a universe and you want to build it with real heart and soul inside it, and that's what really inspired us to make the Suicide Squad game."

team talk

"The prospect of taking down godlike superheroes Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Superman, and the rest of the Justice League feels ambitious. But if there's a developer that can pull this off it's Rocksteady."

Ian Dean
Editor

SQUAD GOALS

The game will combine the studio's trademark narrative-driven gameplay with new third-person shooting. Taking place in an open-world Metropolis, each character has unique abilities, weapons, gear, and melee attacks to upgrade, and different ways to

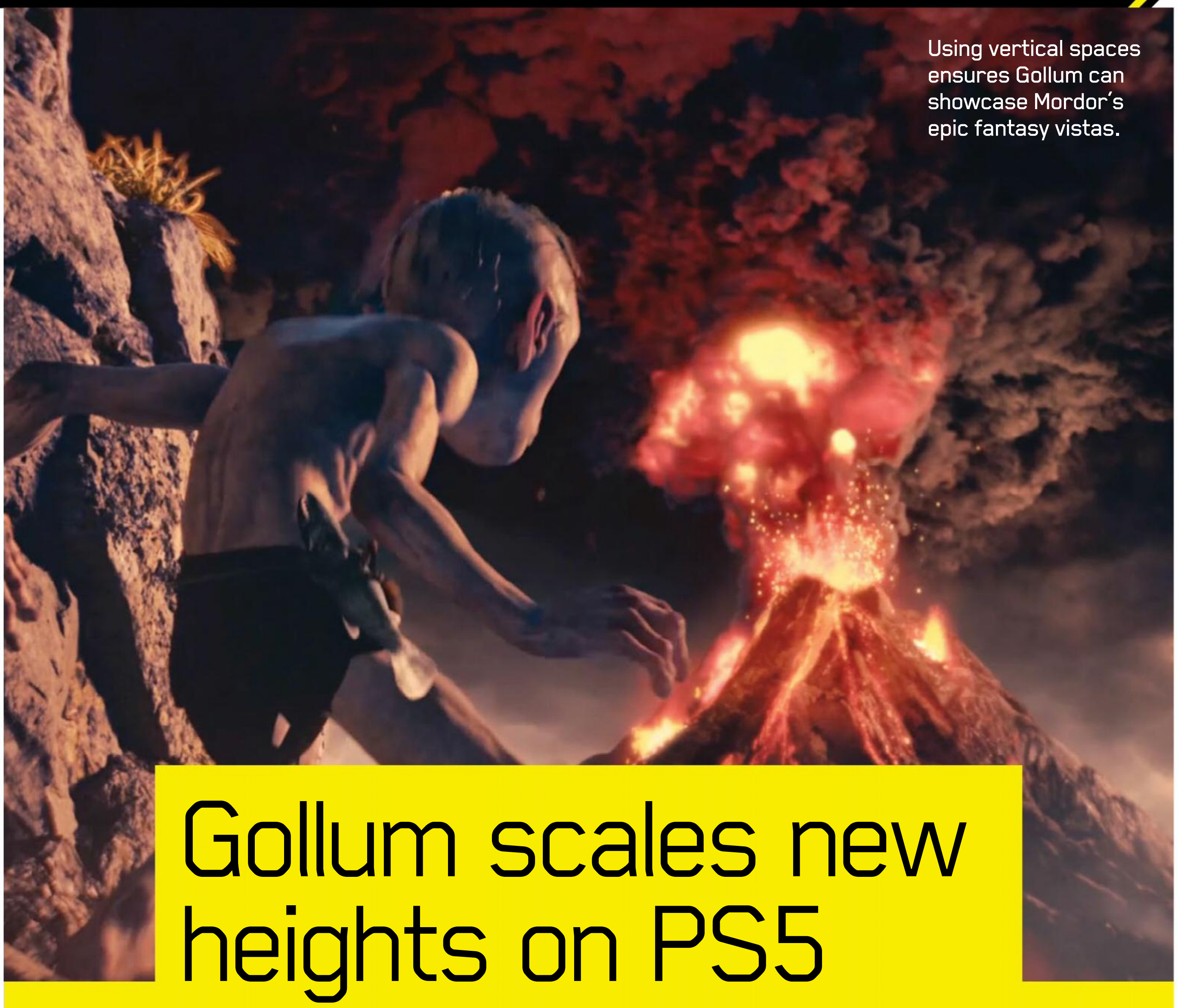
navigate Superman's hometown sandbox. In the teaser target footage we see how Deadshot zips about on a jetpack, Captain Boomerang can teleport, King Shark bounds like a sharp-toothed Hulk, and Harley Quinn has a Bat-like grapple.

Likewise each character has bespoke weapons, from dual-wielded blades to hand-cannons.

"Each has more things you can do and more skill required to master them than you even had with Batman," says Hill, who explains how each character has unique traversal attacks to perform, such as Deadshot's fuel dump that will set enemies on fire. "It's about creating a whole spectrum of possibilities for the player to use and letting them loose and enjoying them."

✱ We've a while to wait, as this should arrive in 2022. Can you bear it?

PERSONA APPEAL
Siding with either personality will create a 'dominant' persona. This will influence animations, music, and audio, and some gameplay situations, as well as in-game dialogue.



Using vertical spaces ensures Gollum can showcase Mordor's epic fantasy vistas.

Gollum scales new heights on PS5

Gollum picks up some parkour from the Prince

03

It's like Prince Of Persia – really? We never imagined we'd be comparing Gollum, the foul-mouthed hermit from JRR Tolkien's fantasy novels, with Ubisoft's parkour prince, but there's a touch of his magic to this PlayStation 5 adventure.

Developer Daedalic has a track record of making good adventure games, and is using some of that know-how to ensure Gollum's stealth feels both unique and in-character.

The world is a vertical space in which Gollum can clamber and climb to get the drop on his enemies. Yet he's no fighter. Gollum's strength is in cunning, not combat. You won't take on enemies directly; instead you'll use items to distract guards, activate environmental hazards to crush foes, or coerce enemies to turn on one another.

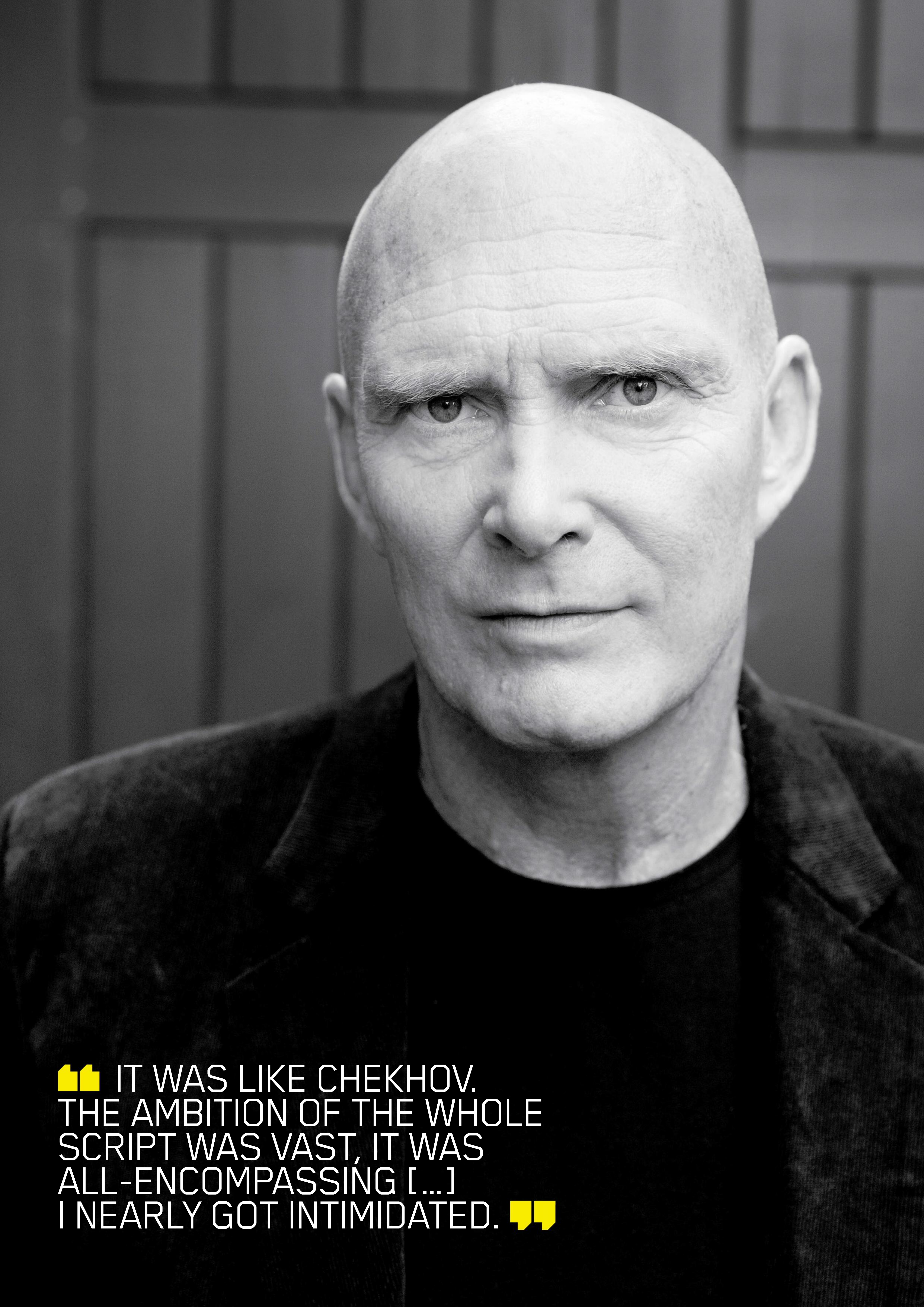
> GOLLUM'S NO FIGHTER. HIS STRENGTH IS IN CUNNING, NOT COMBAT.

Gollum is a survivor and can use his cunning to sneak past the orcs and creatures of Mordor, or rely on his gift of the gab to persuade his adversaries to do as he wishes. This latter skill plays on the character's split personality, as Sméagol and Gollum internally struggle for control. Which side you choose to follow will affect how the adventure opens up, and the overall story.

FISHY TALE

The game is set prior to the events of The Lord Of The Rings. Gollum is searching Mordor for Bilbo Baggins and the Ring, but Sauron's servants capture him and his own quest for survival takes over. Daedalic teases how the Sméagol-side of the character throws a figurative rotten fish into the works and opens up new, conflicting goals. We can't wait to discover what these are.

✱ Gollum releases in 2021 on PS5. Will you embrace Sméagol or Gollum?



> “IT WAS LIKE CHEKHOV.
> THE AMBITION OF THE WHOLE
> SCRIPT WAS VAST, IT WAS
> ALL-ENCOMPASSING […]
> I NEARLY GOT INTIMIDATED.”

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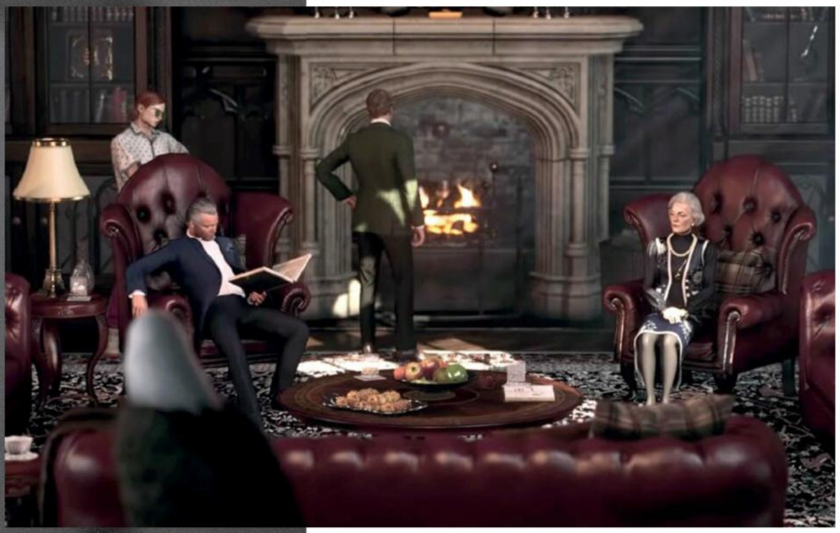
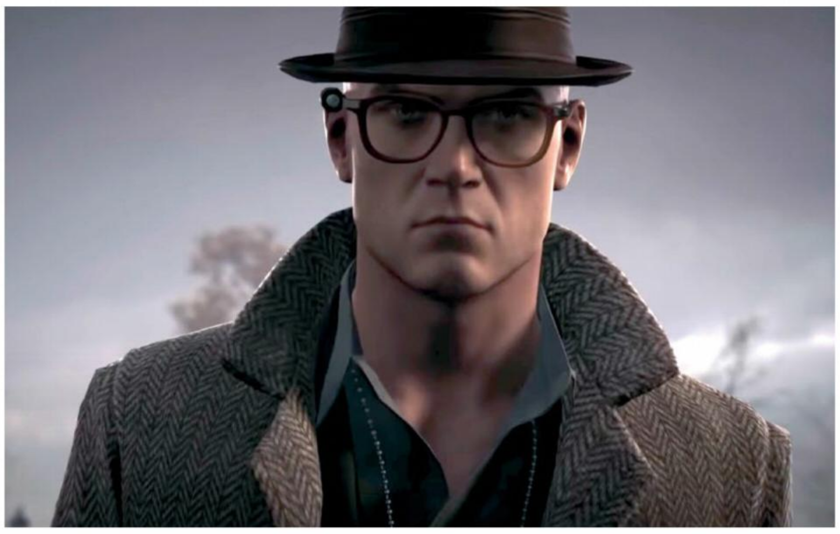
HIT ACTOR "I really like the guy," says David Bateson as he reveals he's tapped into his own isolated childhood to bring an emotional resonance to Agent 47.



The new game's script is like a Hollywood plot. Knives Out, anyone?



To get into Thornbridge Manor, Agent 47 takes on the role of a police detective.

Hitman 3 will be bigger than ever

David Bateson teases the sequel's epic scale

04

"It felt like I'd just read a Hollywood film script," says David Bateson, the actor who has voiced Agent 47 in every Hitman game. He's celebrating 20 years starring as videogames' most famous assassin, and tells us Hitman 3 will be something very special.

The actor says of Hitman 3's script: "It was so vast, it was so audacious, demanding, and in-depth. Bloody hell, it was like Chekhov. The ambition of the whole script was vast, it was all-encompassing.

He laughs, and adds, "I nearly got intimidated."

As we discuss how IO Interactive separated from Warner Bros Entertainment, he explains the move turned out to be a good one for the developer. A new branch of the studio has been set up in Malmö, Sony has adopted Hitman 3 as a launch-window PS5 game, and the now-independent studio can take control of Hitman fully, and do what it wants with the series.

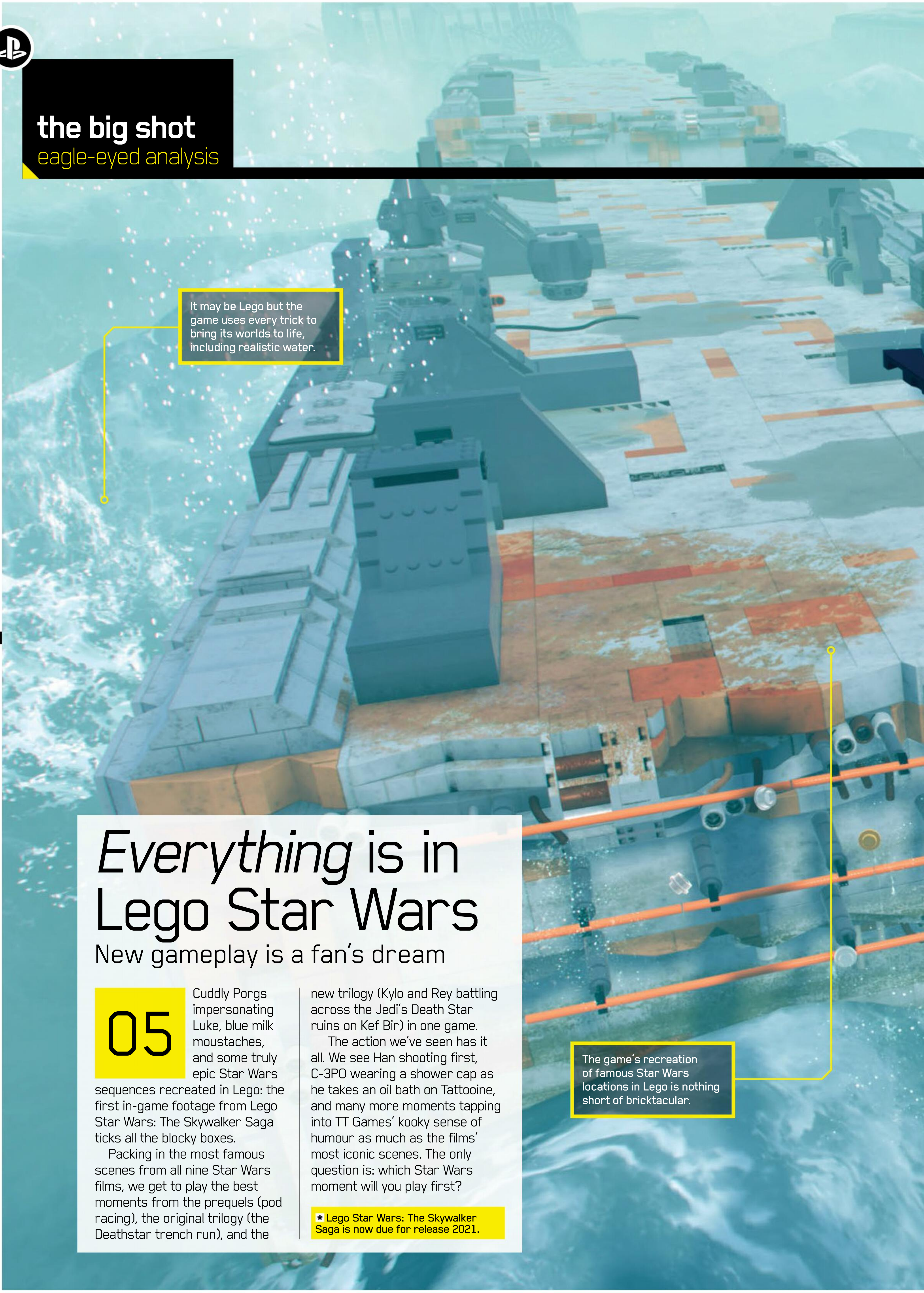
"There's some pretty shocking stuff going on, in a good sense, with Hitman 3," teases the actor.

THE MANOR BORN

Bateson has been garotting targets as Agent 47 since the series began, and the one time he almost missed out – for Hitman: Absolution – protests from fans saw the actor reinstated. It turned out to be one of the actor's favourite entries.

With Bateson on board, then, it feels proper that Hitman 3 will round out this current trilogy of games, and the most recently revealed mission recalls one of the series' best-ever stages. Thornbridge Manor feels like a homage to Hitman: Contracts' Beldingford Manor, and evokes the filmic qualities Bateson has expressed. It's a classic murder mystery weekend where you can put your detective skills to the test and do a little dispatching of your own.

* Hitman 3 will be out on PS5 in January. Will you be taking out a contract?



It may be Lego but the game uses every trick to bring its worlds to life, including realistic water.

The game's recreation of famous Star Wars locations in Lego is nothing short of bricktacular.

Everything is in Lego Star Wars

New gameplay is a fan's dream

05 Cuddly Porgs impersonating Luke, blue milk moustaches, and some truly epic Star Wars sequences recreated in Lego: the first in-game footage from Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga ticks all the blocky boxes.

Packing in the most famous scenes from all nine Star Wars films, we get to play the best moments from the prequels (pod racing), the original trilogy (the Deathstar trench run), and the new trilogy (Kylo and Rey battling across the Jedi's Death Star ruins on Kef Bir) in one game.

The action we've seen has it all. We see Han shooting first, C-3PO wearing a shower cap as he takes an oil bath on Tattooine, and many more moments tapping into TT Games' kooky sense of humour as much as the films' most iconic scenes. The only question is: which Star Wars moment will you play first?

★ Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga is now due for release 2021.

Oh yes, you'll be collecting Lego studs again. In The Skywalker Saga they unlock characters and more.

Everyone is in this game, and we get to play as Rey lightsaber-duelling with Kylo Ren on Kif Bir.

number game

we do the maths

13.11.20

The release date of COD: Black Ops – Cold War on PS4 (PS5 in December).

8.636

The width, in mm, of the Desperados III collector's edition – the world's smallest!

15,000,000

The number of humans left alive in Netflix's planned Resident Evil series.

60

Seconds of new Chorus gameplay on PS5. It's a space-bound Control-alike.

£15.99

The price of the first Doom Eternal DLC, The Ancient Gods: Part One.

2021

PS5's Deathloop is now delayed until summer of next year.

28

The number of colour options for DualShock 4, available now.

5,110

Days since NHL 21 cover star Alex Ovechkin scored his famous goal.

The band were fans of Octodad when Young Horses reached out to them to create the music.

We're talkin' 'bout Bugsnax

Kero Kero Bonito and Seth Parker on crafting an earworm

06

The ridiculously catchy refrain is 'It's Bugsnax' but just what *is* Bugsnax? Well, it's very simple: it's half bug and half snack with a side order of 'you are what you eat.' As a reporter, you travel to remote Snaktooth Island to follow up on a tip-off from an explorer. Your goal is to capture the titular tasty ticks and prove their existence to the world. But when you arrive, the explorer is nowhere to be found – and that's just the start of your problems.

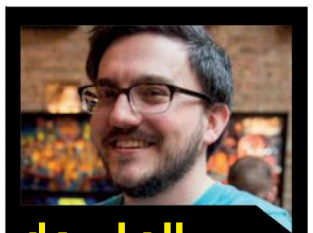
This is all recounted in the theme song by Kero Kero Bonito, a track so catchy that since first hearing it, it's haunted our every waking hour (and some of the ones we are asleep for as well). We interrogate the band and the game's composer, Seth Parker, about how the earworm came into being.

Drummer Gus Lobban and guitarist Jamie Bulled are also behind the band's keyboards and production. Vocalist Sarah Bonito completes the trio. Lobban tells us how their involvement with Bugsnax began.

> “CHOOSING TO WORK WITH KERO KERO BONITO WAS A "NO-BRAINER."”

"Phil [Tibitoski] at Young Horses [...] emailed us directly, which was cool. It turned out he'd seen us play in Chicago, and we already knew all about their previous game, Octodad.

"Phil wasted no time and explained Bugsnax as if it was completely ordinary to him: 'So, the game's called Bugsnax, and it's about this island where all the creatures are part bug, part snack, and when the Grumpuses eat them, their body parts transform into them. Anyway, let me know if you've got any questions!'"



dev talk

"Most of the instruments heard in Bugsnax are played by either my Korg Ms-20 Mini or the Teenage Engineering Op-1, often through the Goodhertz Vulf Compressor plugin. [...] I've tried to get across the wonkiness of the game and the snax while having the music help to create a pleasant atmosphere."

Seth Parker
Composer and lead sound designer, Young Horses

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Seth Parker says that choosing to work with Kero Kero Bonito was a "no-brainer." He'd used the band's song 'Picture This' as the backing track to an early draft of the game's trailer and felt that the sound fitted well. However, he adds, "The lyrical content of 'Picture This' was not perfectly suited to a game about edible creatures that are half bug and half snack. (Let's be honest, what song is?)"

The developer "hesitantly" reached out to the band to query if

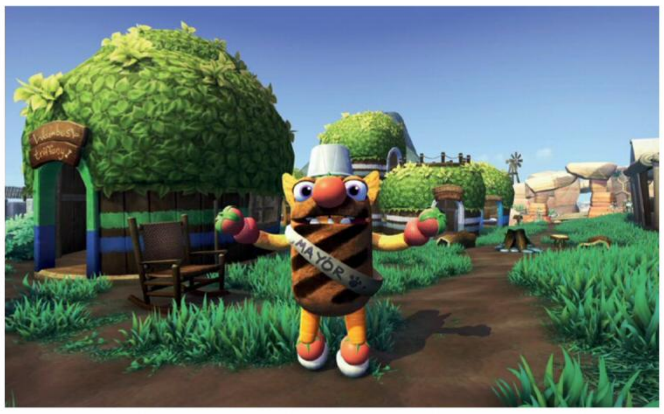
BONI-TWO
We ask the band about games they love. Sarah Bonito says, "PS2 was my first console and I was obsessed with playing Crash Bandicoot every day after school."

they could turn around a fully bespoke theme song in a relatively short amount of time.

"As it turns out, the timing worked perfectly," Parker says, later adding, "They nailed it with their first draft almost exactly. [...] We couldn't be happier with how the song has turned out and the fantastic response it has gotten from the public!"

When we ask Lobban about how the band composed the song, it comes back to 'Picture This.'

"Young Horses suggested [it] was in the Bugsnax ballpark, so I used that track's structure and arrangement as a basis," he explains over email, "I programmed a beat and wrote the music by playing along with a keyboard while freestyling vocal melodies over the top. The instrumental was mostly put together with a Roland JV-1010 (a sound generator from 2000 whose tones ended up in lots of fifth-gen videogames) to which I added some synth sounds of my own."



On Snaktooth, you are what you eat. We're already planning our menu.

Due to the global health crisis, Bonito had to buy a microphone and set up a makeshift home studio to record her vocal track.

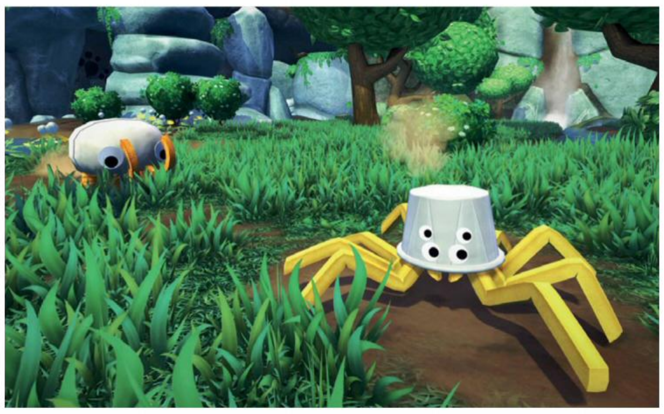
SOMETHING TO CHEW ON

"The key to catchiness," Lobban tells us, both musically sense and conceptually, "Is to articulate something memorable concisely."

We think you'll agree 'It's Bugsnax!' is that to a tee. Lobban explains the process further: "Songwriting is about drawing ideas from your subconscious and arranging them well; I find that the subconscious has a tendency to suggest obvious, resonant phrases, which is great since that is exactly what you want to give people, though it takes a bit of editing to keep them original and functional. 'It's Bugsnax!' is no different – what you hear are our best subconscious ideas about half-bug-half-snack creatures improvised and formed into a song."

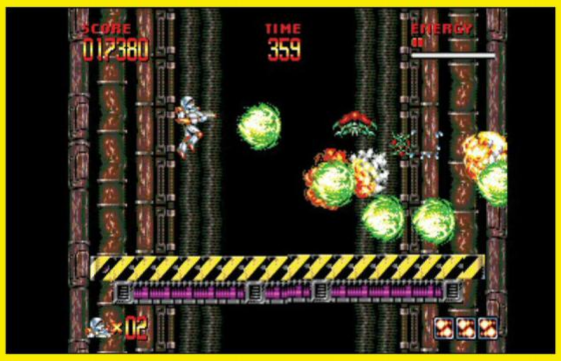
It's fair to say the song was a delightful surprise, and we're going to love exploring Snaktooth Island.

* Bugsnax will launch on both PS4 and PS5 in December this year.



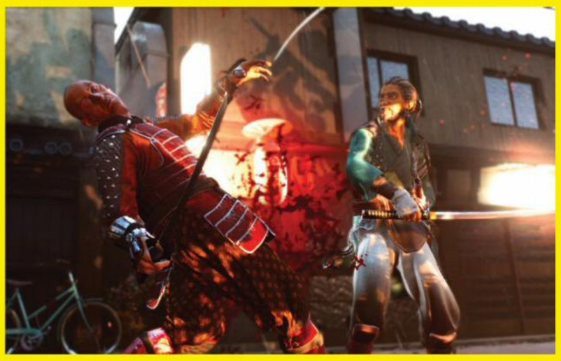
You'll need to fulfil requests as well as catch 'snax for yourself.

info patches
update your brain



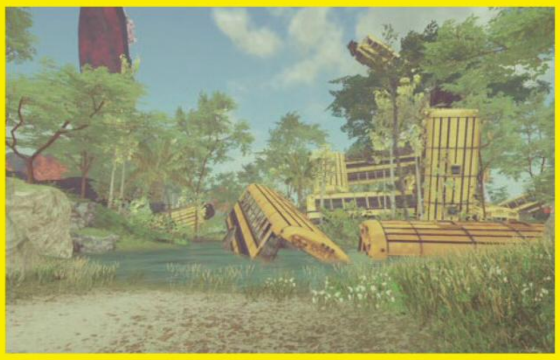
YES, TURRICAN

The legendary 16-bit-era metroidvania shooter is heading to PS4 in two collections, Turrican Anthology Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. Featuring the original Amiga trilogy, console editions, and the unreleased Super Turrican Director's Cut, there's plenty here for retro-heads. Be warned, physical copies will be very limited.



BUSHIDO'S BACK

The PS1 cult classic Bushido Blade is the inspiration for Kickstarter indie duellist Die By The Blade. Set in a 'Samuraipunk' universe the emphasis is on parries and counters as you're always one hit away from defeat. As enemies have specific fighting styles and attacks you're encouraged to learn and adapt.



AN UNFORGETTABLE TRIP

The elevator pitch for PS5 game Lost At Sea is 'Firewatch-meets-The-Witness-meets-Hello-Neighbour.' It's a story-heavy, first-person exploration of life, love, and family on what at first glance appears to be a deserted island. There *is* something out there, but you'll have to watch this space to discover what it is.

Age Of Sigmar's off the table

Storm Ground is the wargame's first PS4 strategy game

07

Warhammer Age Of Sigmar is, in tabletop terms, the successor to the original Warhammer Fantasy Battle. The dark fantasy game hasn't been translated into videogames very often (unlike its science-fiction cousin Warhammer 40,000). Storm Ground is the first strategy game to inhabit Games Workshop's bestselling world, and it's shaping up to be a lusciously good-looking chinstroker.

This strategy game is turn-based, but even so it's designed to be fast-paced and offer plenty of spectacular-looking fights. As you progress through the non-linear campaign you'll be able to build up and customise your fantasy forces. It should also offer something a little different on subsequent new playthroughs. Of course, you can take your beefed-up army online to battle other players one-on-one too.

DEATH BRINGER

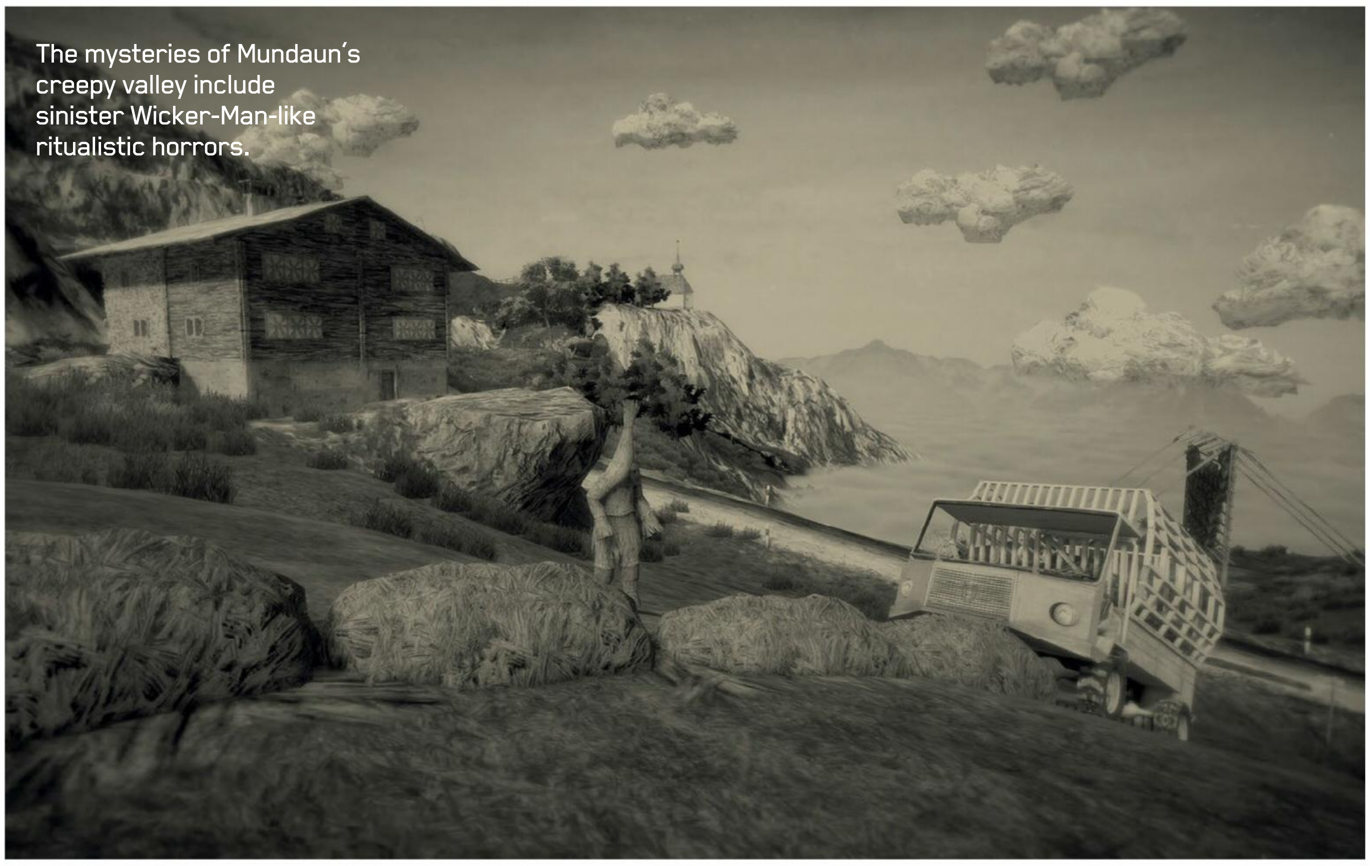
Published by Focus Home Interactive and developed by Gasket Games, Storm Ground is centred on the Stormcast Eternals. Decked out in full Sigmarite armour, riding stardrakes, and wielding lighting, they're sort of like angelic Space Marines. They might fight against Chaos, but they're an unstoppable force who fight purely for the sake of vengeance, and *always* pose like they're modelling for an '80s metal album cover.

This "vengeance made manifest" is what the world needs, though, as it's the only thing that can push back against the darkness invading the world. You must take on Death itself plus a legion of returning souls to take back the land, your Stormcast Eternals bringing some badass retribution through the Gates Of The Celestial Realm. Warhammer once again proves that while fantasy might be quite a busy genre, it can always put an original twist on the tropes. These are some pearly gates we'd be scared to approach.

> “THEY'RE AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE WHO FIGHT PURELY FOR THE SAKE OF VENGEANCE.”

* Storm Ground comes to PS4 early in 2021, so there's time to pray for victory.

RUMANTSCH READER
The game's dialogue is (subtitled) Rumantsch, which is spoken as a first language by about 35,000 people. "I wanted to have Rumantsch voice acting to have that authenticity," says Ziegler.



The mysteries of Mundaun's creepy valley include sinister Wicker-Man-like ritualistic horrors.

Mundaun is hand-penciled horror

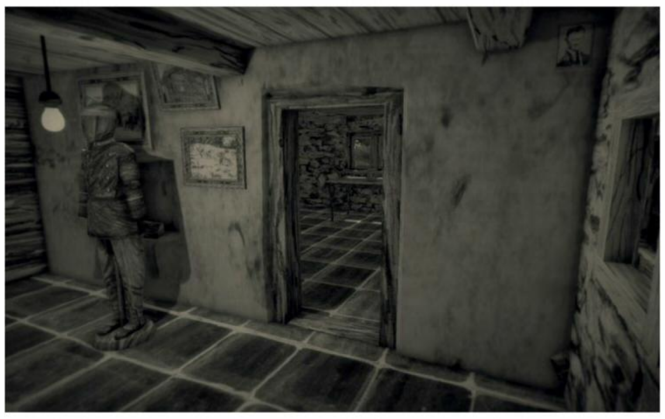
Michel Ziegler on crafting his Alpine valley of terror

08 We've seen low-poly horror before, but there's something uniquely expressive about every bit of art that's gone into making Mudaun – everything is hand-penciled by creator Michel Ziegler himself.

"All the textures are hand-drawn with pencil and paper," he explains. "I begin by creating a 3D model, then I print the UV map and use that as a rough template to base the texture drawing on. They are then scanned and applied to the 3D models." It's a unique look. "Where things are left unspoken, unseen, or the visuals have a degree of abstraction, the imagination of the player can run wild a bit."

The game's set in a secluded Alpine valley, and you ascend the mountain as you uncover the mystery surrounding your grandfather's death. "The world and lore of this place is perfect to hide away little things to discover for the curious," says Ziegler.

Enemies can be hard to predict, and will even follow you into houses. A fear system means you might be rooted to the spot. "I wanted the element of threat [to] be reflected in the gameplay as well as the atmosphere and narrative. Exploration is key."



Everything exists for a reason. Sometimes that reason is to scare the pants off you.

* What is it you look for in a horror game? Let us know: opm@futurenet.com

PlayStation voices

the month in mouthing off

"Multiplayer/social VR, large-scale VR, AI driven characters… All feel like natural evolution for the [VR] medium." Innerspace VR co-founder **Balthazar Auxietre** wants big things for VR.

"We even got an urbanist in our team […] We just hired him to just help us design a city that makes sense, you know?" **Paweł Mielniczuk** tells us how Night City came to be.

"RPGs are one of the riskiest kinds of game to develop from a financial perspective." Fortunately for **Yoshitaka Murayama**, Eiyuden Chronicle was Kickstarted.

WITCH WITCHER?

Geralt is heading to PS5! Everyone's favourite grouch is getting a next-gen debut in a remaster of The Witcher 3, featuring ray tracing and fast SSD-enabled load times.

NEW MAN'S SKY

No Man's Sky dev Hello Games is working on a new, ambitious title, and it's not a sequel to the space exploration sim.

CROWD-KILLER

Aragami 2 is bringing back the cult homage to Tenchu, and this time we get to stealth-kill with two friends in tow. The best news? It's getting a PS5 release.

HIT MAKER

The Street Fighter III: The Collection four-disc box set will feature 72 tracks from the classic Capcom series on beautiful vinyl. We wants it!

KEEP DREAMING

Media Molecule co-founder Alex Evans is leaving the Dreams studio after 13 years with the Sony-owned developer. He leaves saying Dreams has some big surprises in store.

LOCAL LOCKDOWN

Not being able to play Tony Hawk's Pro Skater local matches like we did in the good old days really has us longing for a better, closer future.

The Lovely Edition includes the game, a foldout map, and item catalogue (the record is sold separately).

A world of items.
Spring / Summer
Untitled Goose Game
by House House
EVERYONE
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ESRB

Untitled Goose Game goes eco

Iam8bit releases a truly Lovely Edition

09

Limited physical runs and collectibles aren't new to Iam8bit. You've got the company to thank for your Wattam records, Hyper Light Drifter prints, and other gems. But Untitled Goose Game's Lovely Edition and vinyl is something new, with 100% recyclable eco-friendly packaging (the vinyl's repurposed).

It's the evolution of the firm's ethical ethos. For instance, it produced the Fortnite World Cup using recyclable cups. "We're trying to move the needle as best we can with the influence we have," says co-owner Jon M Gibson. "Not only were we engineering sustainable packaging, we also had the collector in mind, in terms of it feeling substantial. It was important that our eco-friendly packaging didn't feel cheap or flimsy – that it felt premium, while still being environmentally conscious." Even so, it's no more expensive than the firm's usual limited print editions.

"When I look through my digital music collection, I fail to 'feel' too much of anything," says co-owner Amanda White. "But if I am looking through my record collection, I recall memories associated with every vinyl. [...] We feel an obligation to be eco-conscious with our physical goods, we also feel an obligation to create physical goods, because digital just doesn't leave the same impression."

> IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT IT DIDN'T FEEL FLIMSY.

Is this just the start, then? "Hell yes! The Lovely Edition of Untitled Goose Game was our first step," says Gibson. Eco-friendly collectibles sound honking great to us.

The game just received a free local co-op mode. *Two* horrible geese!

* Join us in grabbing more ethical gaming goodies over at bit.ly/opm8bit.

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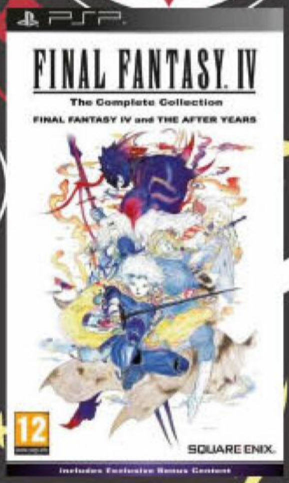
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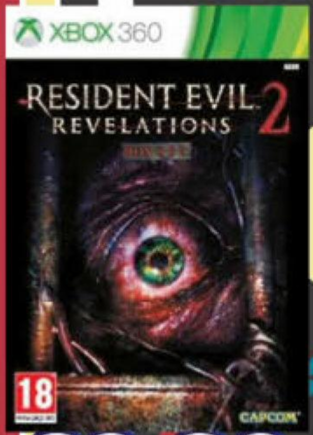
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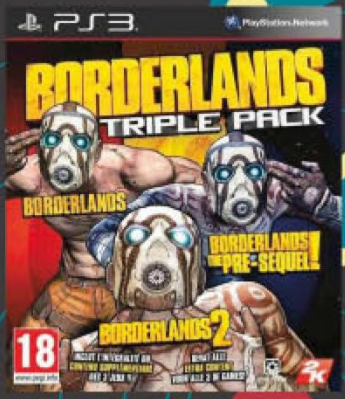
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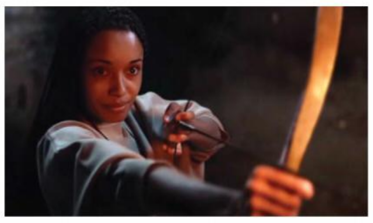

FEEL THE POWER
PS5's first TV ad launched in August and pushed the DualSense controller, including its haptic feedback and adaptive triggers, as next gen's biggest asset. This is all about the feel of playing on PS5.

10 just one more question…

the team debate this month's burning issue

Which PlayStation advert was most memorable?

IAN DEAN
EDITOR

CHRIS CUNNINGHAM CREATED ONE OF PLAYSTATION'S GREATEST ADS.

Sony's come a long way from the days of shock and awe, when killing a goat to promote God Of War was deemed a 'good idea'. Now it's literally touchy-feely as it attempts to convey the power of DualSense. But back in 1999 a Scottish girl who perhaps was an alien sold us PlayStation, and I loved it. Shot like a lost tape from an X-File, a symmetrically-faced girl sternly told us she'd never visited Grimsby and we should land on our own moon. It was the idea of Mental Wealth, and only PlayStation could free us from the mundanity of modern life. This was the ad for the Nirvana generation, and it's still Sony's best yet. ■

JESS KINGHORN
STAFF WRITER

I HAVE PERHAPS MISPLACED MY BROWS BY HOLDING THEM HIGH.

As much as the fantasy of being a small and soft woodland creature that can nonetheless royally wreck a heavy motor appeals to me, the 2001 Bambi TV spot is not my favourite. No, that honour goes to David Lynch's Welcome To The Third Place. The surrealist posture of 'I refuse to fit into a space you recognise' perfectly represented the general sense of the strange and untapped potential of videogames that wafted through the early noughties. The director is unlikely ever to resurrect his game project Woodcutters From Fiery Ships, but this ad allowed us to dream for a little over a minute. ■

OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT
GAMES EDITOR

GAMING CAN BE MELODRAMATIC, AND THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH EMBRACING THAT.

New York. Flooded. Completely submerged. No, this isn't a disaster flick, it's an advert for PlayStation Pro entitled "Feel The Power Of Pro". As we watch, we see the water drain away as time reverses, showing us the origin point for this nautical nightmare. It reverse-trickles up the stairs of an apartment building, gushes forth from behind the door. The saltiness wasn't the sea, it turns out, but a man shedding tears as he experiences the majesty of Hideo Kojima's Death Stranding via the graphical powerhouse that is PS4 Pro. It's silly. It knows it is. Gaming is about that melodrama. ■

MILFORD COPPOCK
MANAGING ART EDITOR

DO NOT BE FOOLED BY THE DEADLY DONUT HIDING INSIDE A HARMLESS-LOOKING BAGEL TOASTER.

The dangers of exposure to PlayStation were clear to see, as 'Spokesperson' the er… spokesperson for shadowy government agency, Society Against PlayStation (SAPS) introduced us to PS1 back in '95. After only five minutes of playing Ridge Racer, an upstanding young man could be transformed into a gurning chimp, and rats would literally explode, such was The Power of PlayStation™. This was a clever piece of counter advertising that still whisks me back to the mid-'90s golden era when gaming entered the mainstream. Remember, be on your guard. ■

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THE HOT 5 FOR PS5

Five of the most exciting, intriguing games we'll be playing on the next-gen console

01

RATCHET & CLANK: RIFT APART

ETA TBC / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** INSOMNIAC GAMES

"Feels good to be back in action," Ratchet declared in the gameplay demo. It certainly *looks* good in action!

This duo feel inextricable from PlayStation. Insomniac Games, on the other hand, only joined the PlayStation family officially in 2019, after Marvel's Spider-Man launched. But seeing the studio lead the way on PlayStation 5 feels *right*. Not only is Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales pencilled in for later this year, but it was also recently confirmed that Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart will be a launch-window title for PS5 – and Insomniac gave us a glimpse of the gameplay.

The studio confirmed that the game will offer two resolution modes to make full use of the next-gen hardware – 4K at 30fps, plus a smoother 60fps performance mode. PS5's custom SSD has done away with in-game load times. Bits of scenery instantly move around as Ratchet makes use of the titular rifts to blitz around levels, whether that's grappling parts of the stage to fold it in on itself, or literally falling from planet to planet during chase sequences. According to the dev, you'll feel that rift jumping in your hands through the DualSense, as well as hear it thanks to PS5's 3D audio Tempest Engine. The Dualsense's adaptive triggers affect how you use your guns, such as pulling halfway to shoot one blast of a shotgun, and then locking it down to fire a second.

WORLD SHATTERING

The story fits smoothly into the primary game universe (PS4's Ratchet & Clank was a remake of the first game that tied neatly into the animated movie). It features the return of longtime series villain Dr Nefarious, but is aimed to be enjoyable for newcomers – though plenty of series references have been teased. One key addition is a female Lombax who will be playable from some sort of parallel world. Insomniac has been cagey to give more details, refusing even to divulge the number of letters in her name (leading to fan speculation that this could also be Ratchet from an alternate universe).

The game looks super-slick, and is the best we've seen to date for demonstrating just how advanced PS5's tech truly is. It might be a colourful, cartoony platformer and blaster, but the world is amazingly vibrant, and everything is wonderfully fluid – especially when it comes to using the rifts to warp and pull the world around you. Rift Apart is going to be a PS5 launch-window must-play, along with Insomniac's latest Spider-Man outing.

RESIDENT EVIL VILLAGE

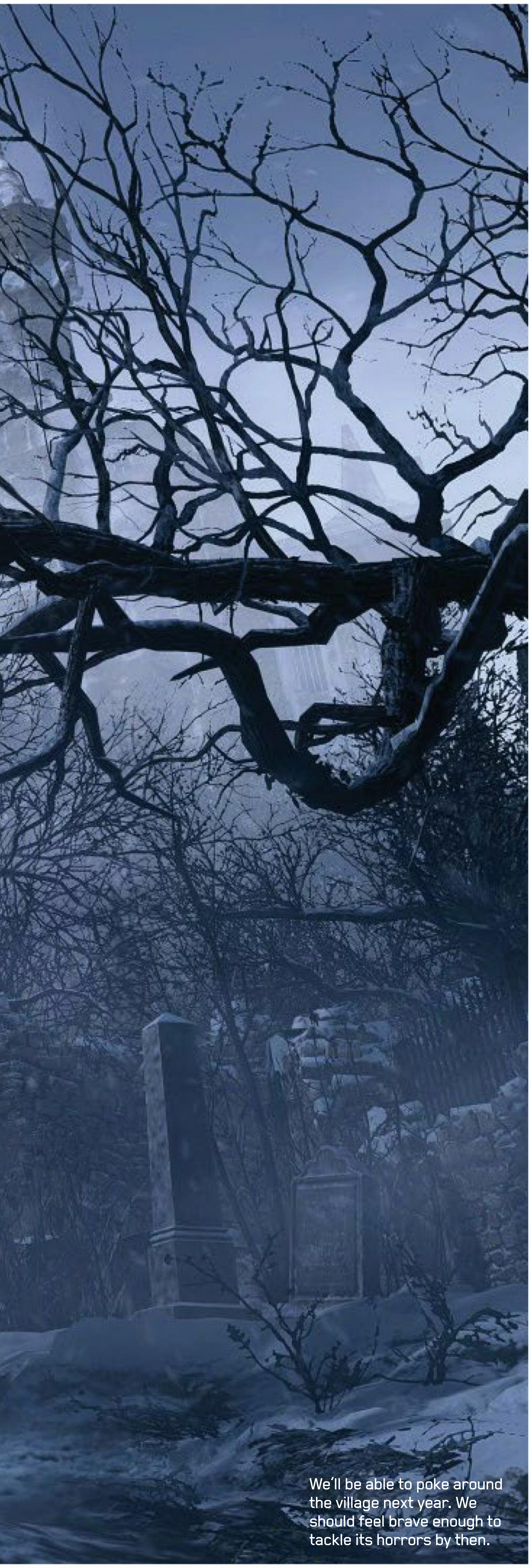
ETA 2021 / **PUB** CAPCOM
DEV CAPCOM

02

Witches, werewolves, and vampires in our Resident Evil universe? Oh yes, we want it so badly. Resident Evil Village is shaping up to be one of PS5's hottest games. It's embracing Resi VII's first-person mode and putting more emphasis on horror, which means it'll make the most of the impressive next-gen 3D audio tech.

"Audio is a key feature to really push the next-gen experience with PS5," says Capcom's Jun Takeuchi on the PS Blog. "It's almost as if 3D Audiotech was made specifically with horror games in mind. It used to be that in order to get that spatial audio, players would have to invest a lot of their own time and money. Now, just putting on a headset, they can get a full 3D audio experience."

"IT'S ALMOST AS IF 3D AUDIOTECH WAS MADE SPECIFICALLY WITH HORROR GAMES IN MIND."



We'll be able to poke around the village next year. We should feel brave enough to tackle its horrors by then.

LITTLE NIGHTMARES II

ETA 11 FEB / **PUB** BANDAI NAMCO / **DEV** TARSIER STUDIOS

03

Creepy dolls, disembodied hands scampering spider-like across hardwood floors, and a teacher who'd rather slap you senseless with a ruler than make you do lines: this sequel has the makings of something incredibly unnerving. If Blumhouse Productions made Roald Dahl's The Twits, it would look something like this.

As a newcomer to Tarsier's macabre world of shadowy delights, the bag-headed Mono is on a quest to find the Black Tower and confront the mysterious Broadcaster. Perhaps he's seen the finale of Doom Patrol series 2 and was not happy. The latest demo isn't giving much of Little Nightmares II's story away, but it does reveal how we'll puzzle past some snappy traps – throwing pine cones onto hidden bear traps sets them off in an addictively exciting manner. It's like popping bubble wrap, but with the threat of losing a limb.

Along the way we pull and puzzle across weird, almost Tim-Burton-like levels, and meet an AI-controlled Six from the original game. With her we'll overcome anything the deviously-minded dev has in store. Now the game's coming to PS5, and we can't wait to see how Little Nightmares II makes use of ray tracing and DualSense's haptics.

SCARLET NEXUS

ETA 2021 / **PUB** BANDAI NAMCO
DEV BANDAI NAMCO STUDIOS

04

Some of Team OPM really can't get enough anime nonsense, and so this melee combat RPG from the team behind the flawed but stylish Code Vein attracts our attention.

The people of New Himika have become so technologically advanced they can access psychic powers from a brain gizmo called the Psynet. This in turn has attracted the attention of The Others, alien beings who feed on brains. What are the chances?

Combat looks pacy, and on PS5 we'll get a solid framerate. Will it be perfect? Probably not. Will it feature surreal and grotesque anime combat? Oh yes.

TRIBES OF MIDGARD

ETA 2021 / **PUB** GEARBOX PUBLISHING / **DEV** NORSFELL

05

Your village holds the Seed Of Yggdrasil, which protects the Norse gods from the threat of other realms. As a human Viking you'll need help defend it from various beasts and the Giant of Jotunheim, who wants to destroy Midgard and the world.

Handily you can team up with nine other players to prep for war, scavenging, crafting, and building defences. But it's PS5's 3D Audio that should impress. It can use many layers of sound that convey enemy movement and what's going on in distinct areas of the environment to clue you into what's out there, in the wilds.

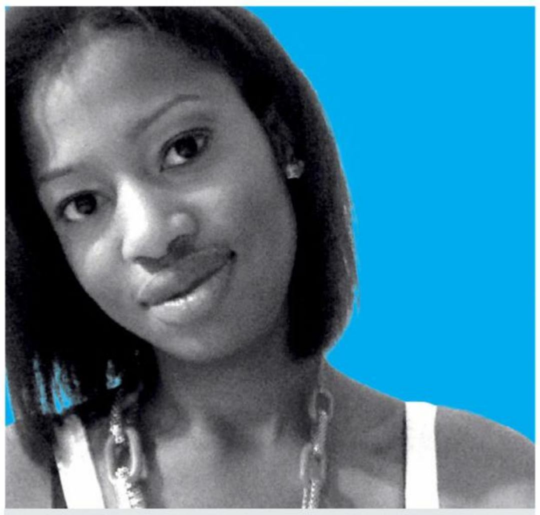
Laura Francis

“IT’S IMPORTANT THAT POC CHARACTERS HAVE FULL-LENGTH CAMPAIGN GAMES, NOT JUST SHORTER GAMES.”

It’s time to give people of colour their full time in the spotlight

Given the current zeitgeist, it’s safe to say that there is a need for more POC characters to have lengthy campaigns built around them, rather than just shorter games or expansions. And I’ve noticed that this has been a mainstay in gaming for too long – POC characters just being relegated to short games or expansions.

Think of Uncharted: The Lost Legacy, Dishonored: Death Of The Outsider, or Assassin’s Creed: Freedom Cry, which are all games with POC protagonists with short campaigns. It’s clear that it’s still seen as a risk by developers and publishers to put Black characters front and centre… Yet on the movie front we’ve had the sheer amazingness of the Miles-starring Spider-Man: Into The Spider-verse, a brilliant animated film that I’ve rewatched to death, which picked up accolades well into the double digits. That was released in 2018, the same year as Marvel’s Spider-Man on PS4, which also teases Miles as a future hero. Naturally, hearing of a brand-new story set within that world with Miles Morales as the leading man in the PS4 reveal event I got excited. Like, I got *really* excited! I’m there day one!



WRITER BIO

It’s crazy to think just a couple of very short years ago, Laura Francis had absolutely no idea as to who Miles Morales was, and then she ended up seeing Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse more times than she can count on her fingers and toes together…

The announcement of Marvel’s Spider-Man: Miles Morales was one of the evening’s biggest surprises. I speculated after seeing the trailer that it would be a smaller game in terms of scope, something along the lines of the games I named earlier rather than having the breadth of the Marvel’s Spider-Man’s own The City That Never Sleeps story DLC. And I was right. I’m conflicted, though, because while I’m buzzing about it and absolutely cannot wait to play it and see how it utilises the PS5’s fancy new features, there is a part of me that wishes it were more substantial, and as extensive as its predecessor.

CITY LIMITS

It’s really tricky talking about a game and its scale when I haven’t had the chance to experience it for myself, and it feels a bit premature forming such a strong opinion on a game I’ve not played yet. But after finishing Uncharted: The Lost Legacy and Infamous: First Light each in a single sitting, it makes me feel a tad disheartened as I was hoping for a lengthier game with Miles Morales, not a game I could finish in one web-slinging outing.

But it’s best to wait and see as it’s still unclear as to exactly how long the game will actually be, and besides, everyone plays at their own pace. It’s not enough to go solely by trailers. And hey, it’s exciting that it is its own game! But Miles deserves to be a leading man on par with Peter, and Spider-Verse and his comics prove he’s more than capable.

It also shows why diversity and representation (such as developers taking the time to show accurate skin tones, light darker skin tones, and recreate hair textures outside the afro and braids) is so important. I would like to see more POC characters being given full-length campaigns and as much story and character development as their white counterparts. Putting them at the forefront of shorter games is becoming an unfortunate trend.

Hopefully, Marvel’s Spider-Man: Miles Morales will be expansive enough and feel as much like a full-length game as possible, and there will be enough of a compelling story, an eclectic roster of supporting characters and villains, to keep us gripped. But I think it is a step in the right direction, and games are moving beyond just having ‘diversity characters’, especially with Deathloop, a game with two Black protagonists, coming exclusively to PS5.

Jess Kinghorn

> **IT NEEDN'T BE THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN GOING ANYWHERE – I JUST WANT TO BE MOVED AGAIN.**

Movement is an essential mechanic. Is it time for developers to reinvent this wheel?

Potter-madness was at its peak in the early noughties, and you know what that meant: videogame tie-ins. Hopping onto my broomstick for the first time in Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets was a magical moment that I haven't really experienced in the same way since.

Movement doesn't just have to get you from A to B, it can also inform you of your relationship to the space. In the above example, it's "Yer a wizard, Harry." In Control, learning to levitate feels emblematic of Jesse's shifting relationship to the Oldest House. Superliminal regularly pulls the rug out from under your sleepwalking tootsies, connecting you with its dreamscape in unexpected new ways.

WALK LIKE A MAN

In Yakuza your feet are far less whimsical but remain an engaging way to traverse Kamurocho; battering pedestrians with your shoulder blades or watching them dive out of the way of your power walk is just one small touch that brings the space to life and makes you feel every bit the Japanese gangster in a cheap suit.

My point is that too often the act of moving through a virtual space feels either taken for granted or overlooked. I'm so over hitting the highway with little more than a radio to fiddle with between waymarkers. Final Fantasy XV tries to keep your bro-ad trip interesting through slick-looking character interactions but these are ultimately superficial. On the other hand, lonely car rides only serve to highlight the bloat of too many big-budget open worlds and the sort of Triple-A pacing I find intolerable.

What's really unforgivable, though, is taking your car keys away and leaving you with the cold comfort of a stamina meter; the simple act of movement becomes a frustrating, inefficient chore and I'm glad to see this meter becoming a design relic of yesteryear. Movement doesn't need to be busywork to pad out an empty world, nor does it need to be gimmicky to bring a virtual space to life. As we look towards next-gen dimension hopping, I can't wait to see how developers reinvent movement mechanics for PlayStation 5.

WRITER BIO

If Jess Kinghorn could, she'd hop about Tesco on a Harry Potter broomstick, plushie black cat in tow, making swooshing noises. But society has rules about that sort of thing, and this kind of behaviour is why she plays videogames.

Oscar Taylor-Kent

> **IF DEVS WANT VIDEOGAMES TO BE CINEMATIC, THEY NEED TO THINK ABOUT HOW THEY'RE CONSUMED.**

Most games are many times longer than movies, and devs should consider session length

Picture it: you're sitting down to watch a new, thrilling episode of Postman Pat, and the episode has a bombastic conclusion. Only immediately after finishing, you have to watch the first five to ten minutes of the next episode before you're able to pause and safely turn off the TV. Considering how many games are obsessed with emulating the chops of prestige TV or cinematic movies, too many still have issues with how those experiences are boiled down over an average play session.

As a games reviewer I often have to binge games in a way a lot of people wouldn't. I finished The Last Of Us Part II in two days because 1) I am amazing at videogames and 2) I pretty much had no choice. So, for me, the story flowed readily. But when relaxing with a game over a longer period, the way some games are portioned out can be confusing. There's nothing worse than thinking 'I'll stop after this chapter' only to then feel like you have to watch the next chapter being introduced before you can safely stop from the Pause menu. Not to mention you're not always sure how long a game is, or even how long a chapter will be, unless you risk online spoilers.

GAMING BINGE

As a lifelong game player I appreciate the formats are different, but that's why it can be irksome when it feels like developers are trying to make games like TV or movies without really understanding how they can do so in the right way. Sometimes all it takes is being asked "Do you want to save and quit now?" after a chapter ends, or having a story completion percentage in the options menu. Most open world games, at least, send you back to the world between missions so you can enjoy the game in bite-sized chunks.

Narrative-heavy games like The Last Of Us or The Order: 1886 could really benefit from being more aware of how the casual player will encounter their stories. Ellie's journey is an emotional rollercoaster, but when you split that 20-plus hour journey into daily chunks it doesn't flow in the way it feels intended to be enjoyed, largely because it just isn't signposted very well. Let's have more clear breaks.

WRITER BIO

Oscar Taylor-Kent plays too many games to watch hours of TV as well. To make up for it he films his own TV intros for each game, performing a theme song for each. UN-CHARTED! WHERE IS THE PLACE? NATE DRAKE… IS ON THE CASEEEEE.

IN THE MOOD FOR...

Boyfriends

Strong and sweet, like good coffee – it can only be your latest gaming crush

1 UNTIL DAWN

One of a group of horny horror movie teens, Michael 'Mike' Munroe is by far the best boyfriend there, and real 'we want him to protect us' material. "[Blorp!]nuggets" himself is initially as in over his head as the others, but quickly adapts, spearheading much of the investigation into the local asylum and protecting his friends.

2 MORTAL KOMBAT 11

You might think that for as many reasons as Johnny Cage might be a good boyfriend he'd also be a bad one. And you're right. But MK11's timey-wimey plot has an older Johnny confronting his more obnoxious past self, giving us a new perspective on Sonya Blade's adorkable and more-than-a-little-annoying sweetheart.

3 ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

Twins Jakob and Evie Frye might be assassins operating in Victorian London, but they're more than up for getting about a bit. Fellow assassin Sir Henry Green (real name Jayadeep Mir) and Evie slowly grow closer until a relationship blossoms, and it's heartwarming as you undertake missions together.

4 MASS EFFECT

Garrus Vakarian can be at your side from almost the very beginning of your Mass Effect adventure. Only romanceable in Mass Effect 2 and 3, by this point he's proven himself loyal and capable. And, you may realise, also a caring lover. As he's quite awkward, the blossoming romance is incredibly sweet.

5 LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Sure, Nick Carlyle might be a disembodied head, but he can be a pleasing boyfriend nevertheless. Even without a body he's dedicated to his zombie-slaying girlfriend Juliet, hanging off her behind like a gruesome fashion accessory as he helps her throughout her adventure. He can even control headless zombie bodies for her.

6 HAKUOKI

You're a young lady with demon-tainted blood seeking shelter with the real-life final samurai: the Shinsengumi. Many romance options await, but we love Hajime Saito. The quiet swordsman teaches you to make snow bunnies and is always thinking of your wellbeing as he plays double agent against rival groups and demons alike.

7 DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION

So… "you want to ride the bull"? Iron Bull might be a mean-looking lad, but peel back the layers and you'll find this Freddie-Prinze-Jr-voiced Qunari warrior is a tender swain. Beginning physically, he's happy to keep things casual, but pursue him for a sweet relationship and necklace quest (could *Solas* give you that?).

8 HAVEN

We've only spent a few hours with this upcoming title, but Kay is already one of our favourite boyfriends. Along with his girlfriend Yu, he's stranded on a strange world just trying to survive. Their relationship-in-progress is a sweet rarity in games. Plus, he makes a tasty appledew stew.

9 PERSONA 3: PORTABLE

Only in this PSP version can you play a female protagonist, which switches the female romance options to male ones (Persona remains frustratingly heterosexual). The ever-reliable Akihiko Sanada reveals a softer side as you increase your social link with him, eventually becoming an equally reliable boyfriend.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

RESIDENT EVIL 2
Ada Wong is searching for her boyfriend, John. Or so Leon believes. He might not exist, but we're concerned anyway.

CODE REALIZE: BOUQUET OF RAINBOWS
Victor Frankenstein is just one bookish boi you can pull in this Victorian romance visual novel.

DETROIT: BECOME HUMAN
Within the text itself, Connor doesn't seem to be Hank's official boyfriend. But, *come on.* It just makes sense, doesn't it?

Did we miss your favourite? Got a brilliant In The Mood For idea? Show and tell at **twitter.com/opm_uk**.

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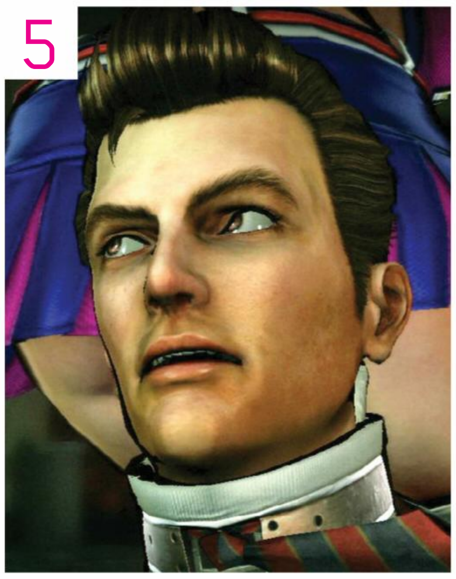

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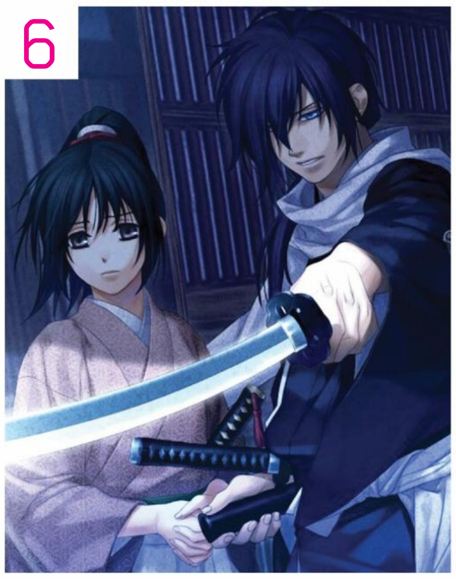

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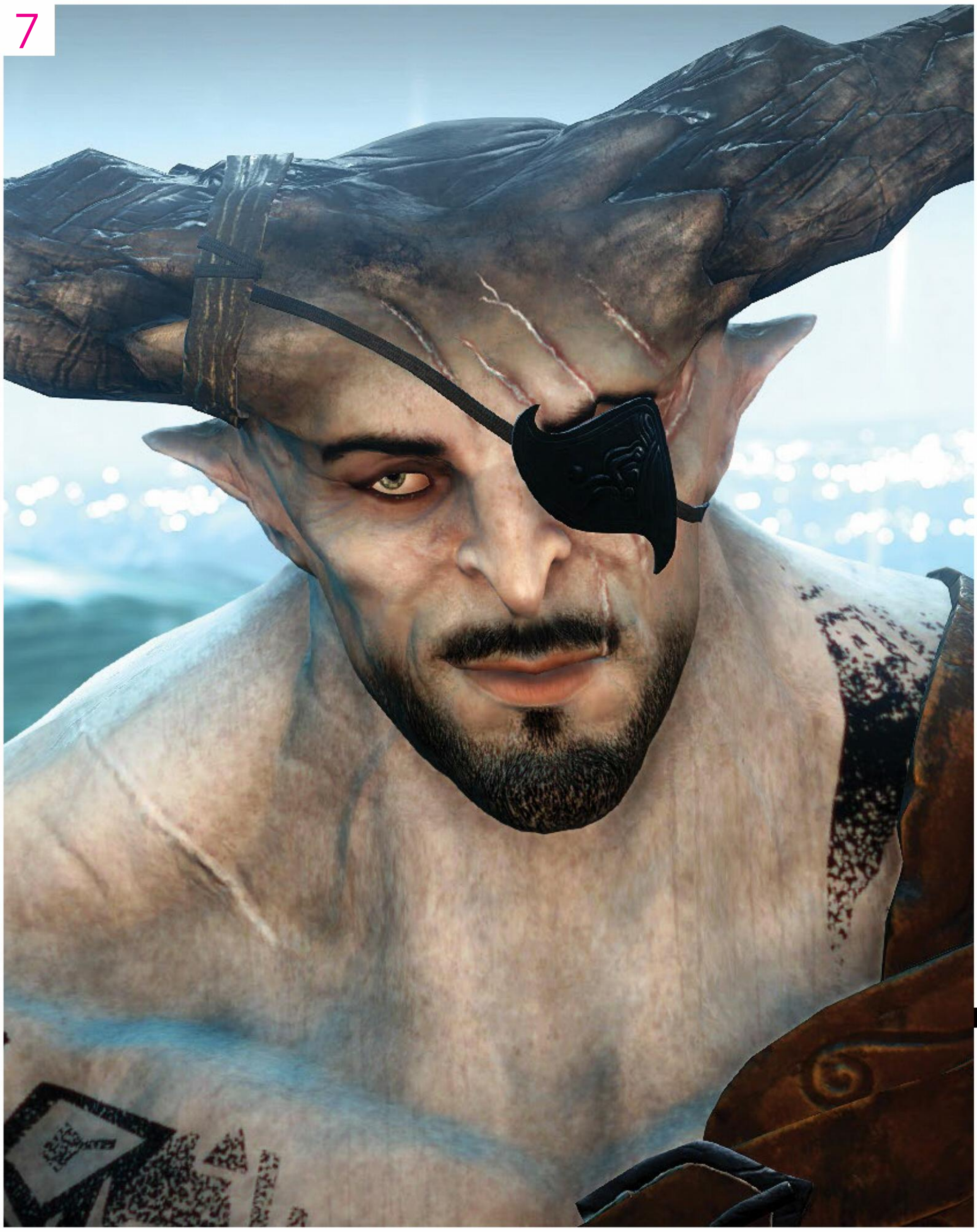
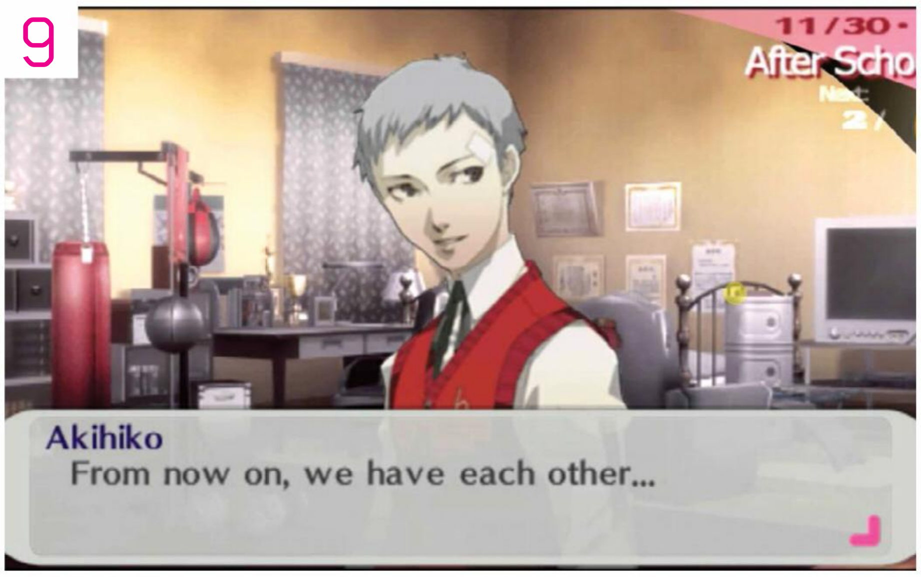


8

Kay

With the lights off? Works for me...

9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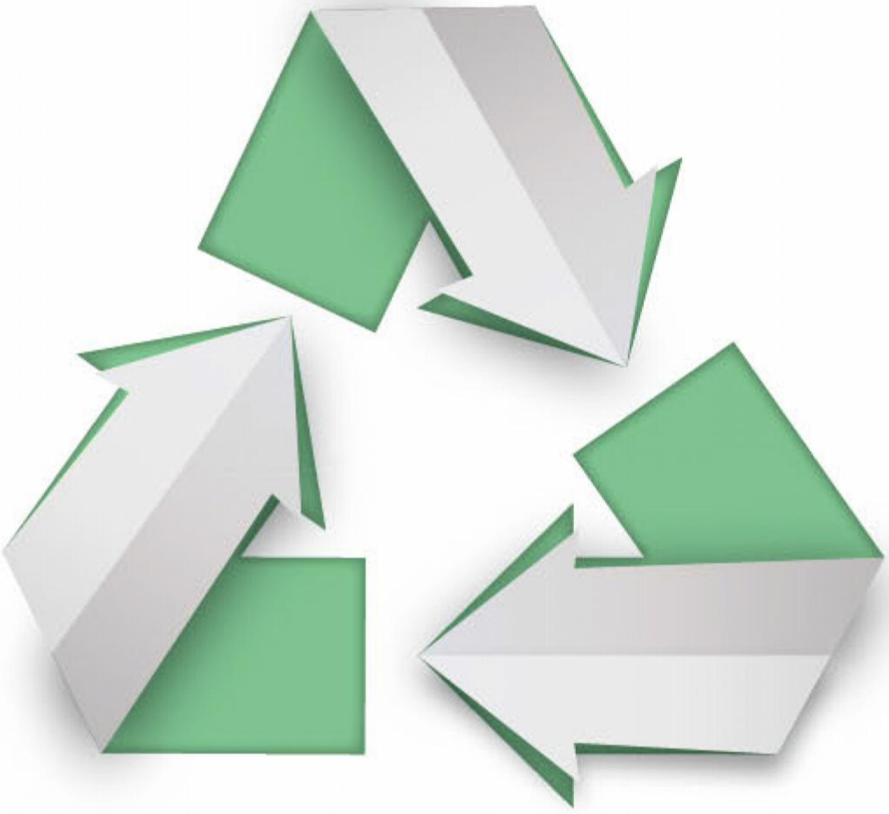
After Scho

Akihiko

From now on, we have each other...



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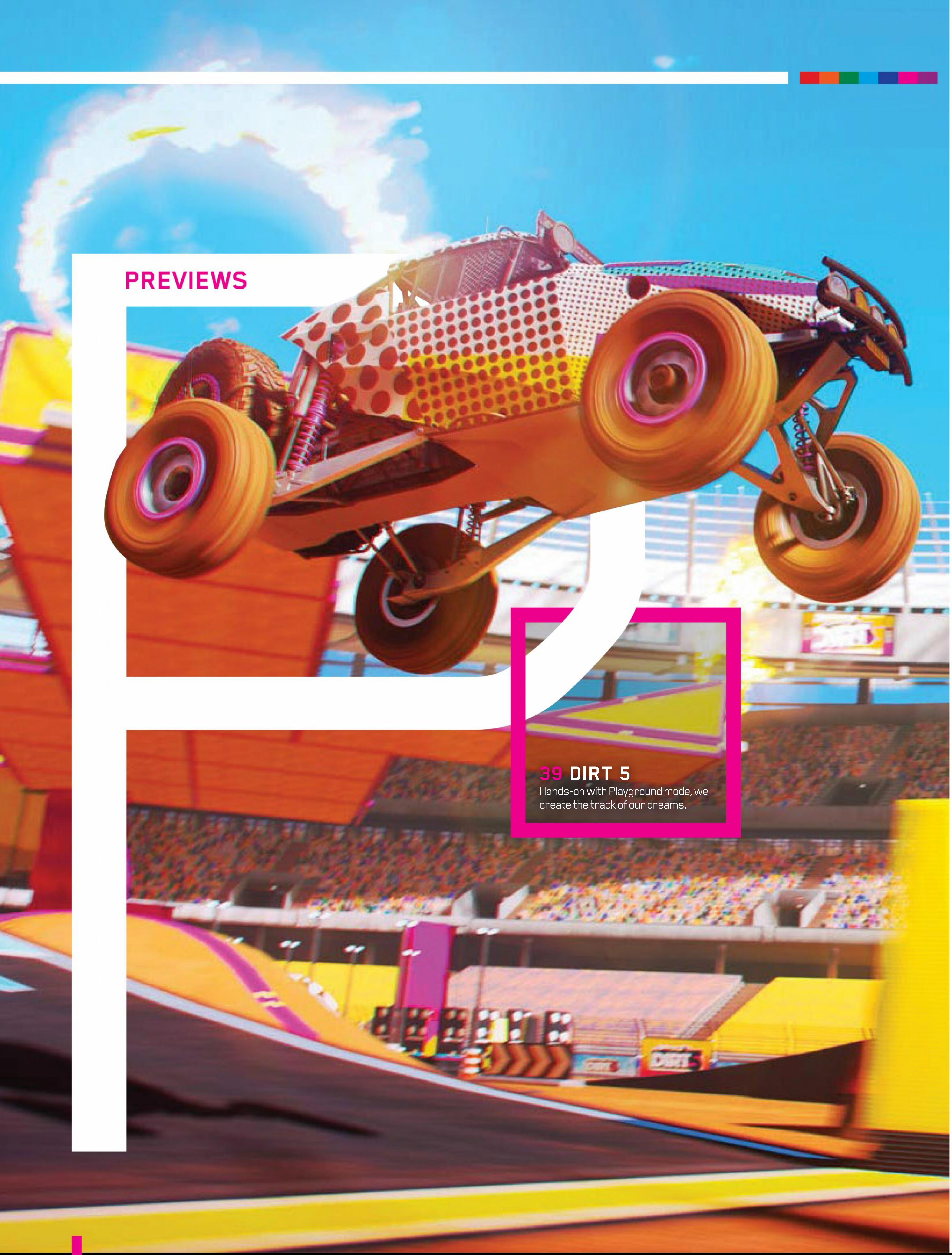
PREVIEWS



39 DIRT 5
Hands-on with Playground mode, we create the track of our dreams.

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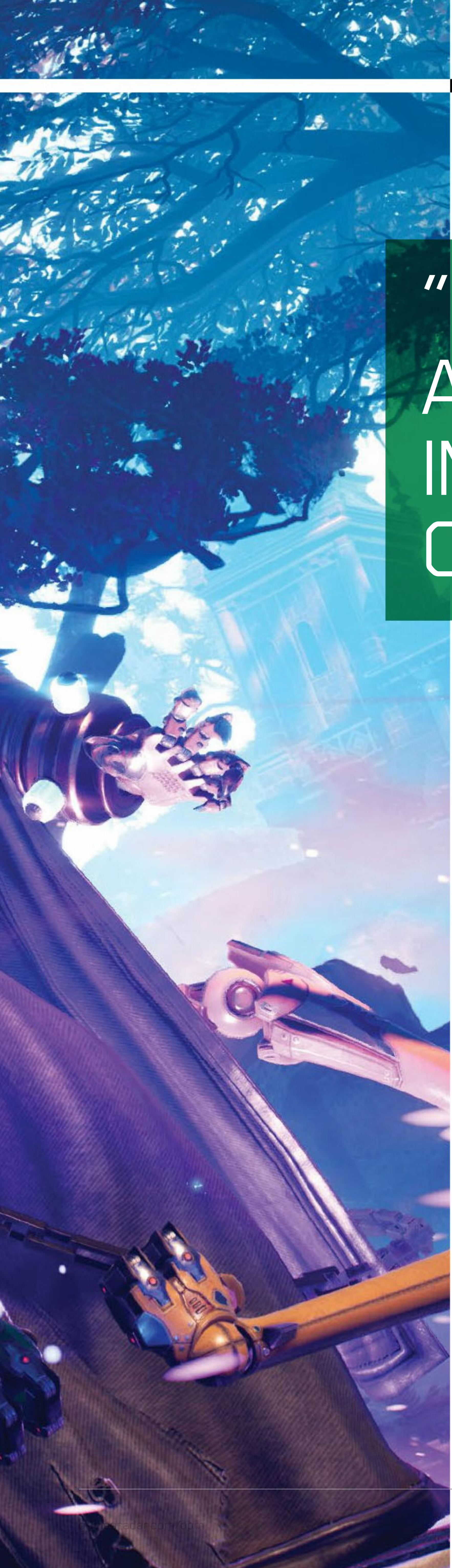
Levels have mid-bosses, ensuring the challenge remains varied throughout each one.



> "CHOOSE A SET OF ARMOUR AND DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF APERION."

FORMAT PS5 / **ETA** 2020
PUB GEARBOX SOFTWARE / **DEV** COUNTERPLAY GAMES

GODFALL

Can the first game ever revealed for PS5 answer all our prayers?

Godfall was one of the first games ever revealed for PlayStation 5, and as such it's got a lot to prove. The looter-slasher has shown itself to be worthy of a new generation with fancy graphics and impressive particle effects, but as more and more information about it comes out, can it possibly meet the rising expectations people have for PlayStation 5 and its initial offering of games?

Godfall's key conceit is simple: you choose a set of armour (medieval European by way of Boris Vallejo), pick a weapon, and dive into the fantasy world of Aperion to slay enemies and relieve them of their loot. As developer Counterplay Games likes to say, you "build your own identity around these legendary figures and become God-like". It's a simple proposition and one that seems – so far – to lead to a pretty compelling experience.

You choose one of 12 Valorplates (armour sets) before heading into the world. Valorplates are broken down into classes: Balanced; Specialised; and Exotic. Some fit with your standard RPG setup and are geared to speed, or tanking, or crowd control, while others are designed to take advantage of cooldown abilities (and accelerate how quickly those cooldowns work), and some are focussed on debuffs, which make them more viable in co-op.

To complement your stylish Arthurian armour, you're also able to equip one of five weapon classes. If you prefer to be lightning-fast and agile, the

»

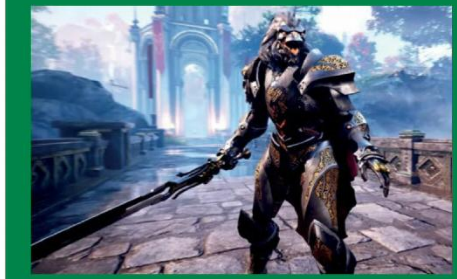
Left The five realms each offer a different aesthetic based on one of the four elements (or spirit) for you to enjoy.

Right Each realm will feature its own distinctive enemies and – we assume – loot.

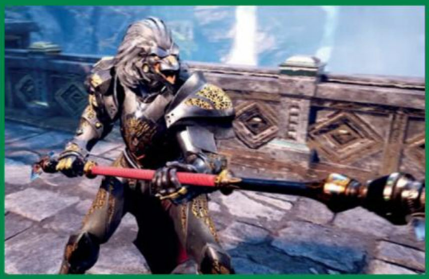
The art direction is particularly colourful for a brutal melee brawler. It looks stunning in motion.

The harder they 'fall

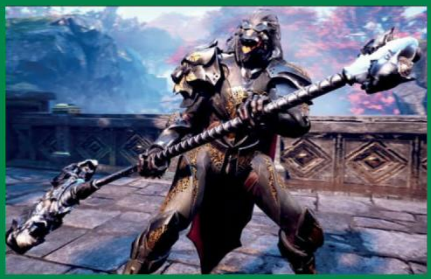
Four of the weapon types you can choose



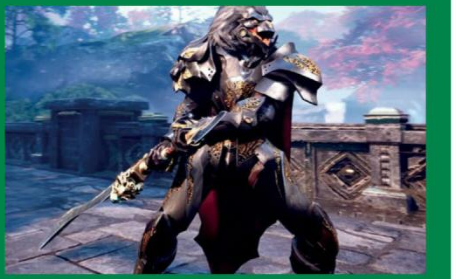
1 The longsword is a balanced, versatile weapon for a wide variety of enemies with a standout heavy Attack Finisher that ends your combos with a flourish.



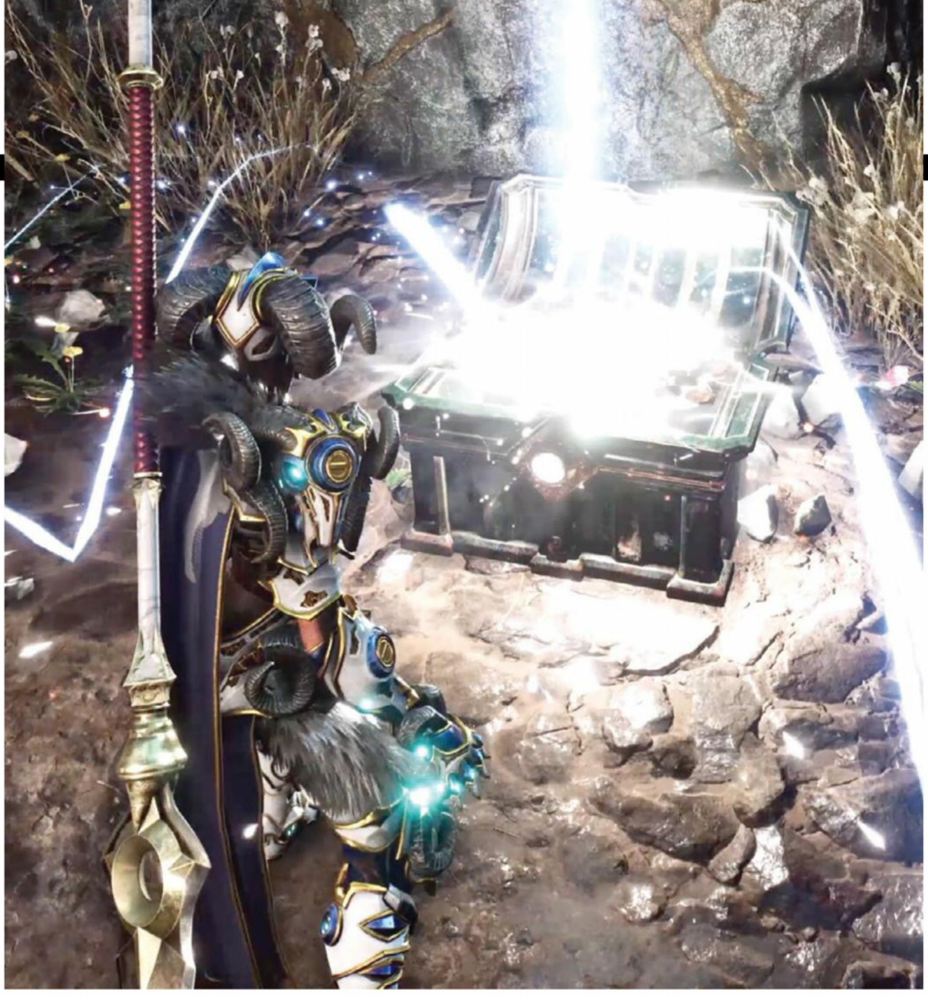
2 Polearms deal damage to enemies at greater range, but there's a cost – they only do a small amount of base damage compared to other weapons.



3 Warhammers are powerful, two-handed hammers that can carve through enemy defences with ease. Pick this if you're happy to sacrifice speed for raw power.

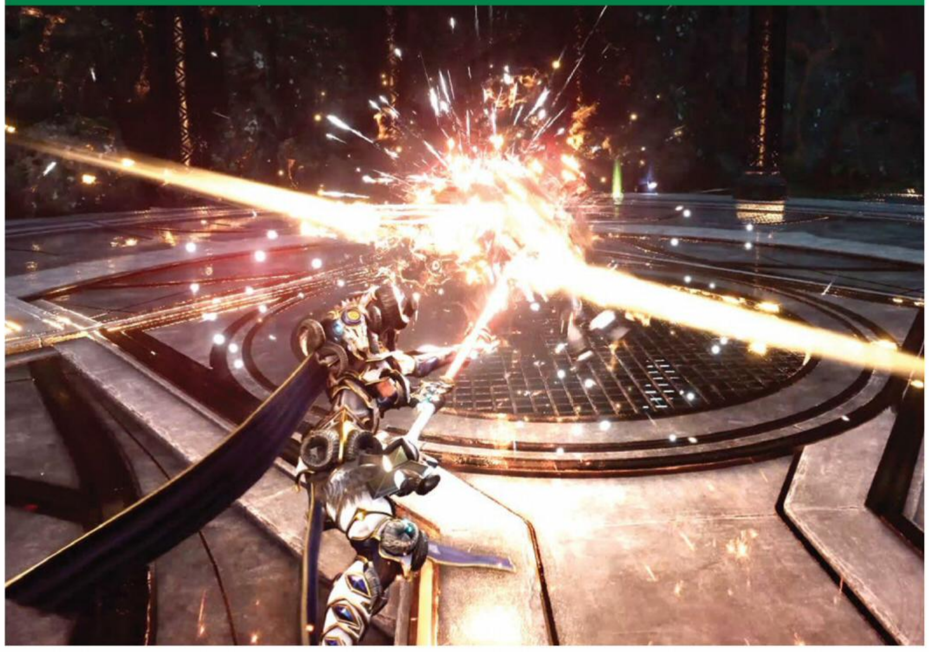


4 Greatswords are similar in combat to warhammers, offering the wielder massive damage and great momentum at the cost of speed and agility.

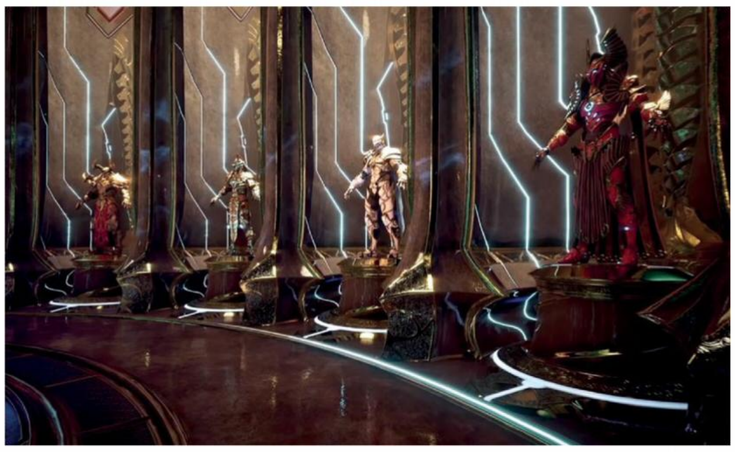


Above Loot! Treasure chests are hidden in the world and when unlocked explode like in a Destiny-like fizz of collectible loot and visual effects.

> "MISSIONS ARE SIMILAR TO DESTINY'S STRIKES: STANDALONE AND SOMEWHAT LINEAR ACTIVITIES."



Above Combat is fast and explodes in a riot of particle and light effects that are putting that ray tracing to the test.



Above Valorplates are tied to progression, and you'll be able to unlock all 12 of them through playing and crafting.

longsword is the way to go. If you're more interested in throwing your weight around and wreaking havoc with brutal momentum, the two-handed hammer is for you. If you want to keep mobs in check and specialise in crowd control, there's the spear, and if you're more into your combos and chaining together attacks, you may prefer to opt for the heavy dual blades or the greatsword.

KNIGHT ON THE TILES

A cursory glance at game in action will show you why combat is the selling point of this game: it's weighty, it's satisfying, and it's gorgeous. Counterplay Games makes a big deal about how good melee action feels on the pad, too: the studio takes advantage of the DualSense controller's haptic feedback to give you a better sense of passing through the game's myriad environments. Imagine walking along a marble floor, Counterplay suggests, trying to get us to imagine the way it feels different through your boots compared to walking over gravel, dirt, or a rain-slick field. The developer tells us we're going to notice the difference as we pass through each of these places – as well as when we dodge, or get knocked off our feet – without ever having to look at the ground onscreen.

Once you've taken a trip to the armoury and got yourself armed and ready for combat, it's time to step into the lush, bright, fantasy realm the game calls home. Missions are similar to Destiny's Strikes: standalone and somewhat linear activities that take you through levels brimming with powerful enemies. You're going to need to think about your Valorplate setup before you jump into a mission, since the end bosses are super-strong and resilient to most attacks. Knowing how to take advantage of any weaknesses is essential.

DEBUFFED BOSSES

Unlike its genre stablemates, Godfall features mid-bosses in each level, mixing up the formula and giving you more to think about when equipping your Valorplates and augment: sure, you may be well-equipped to take down the final boss, but what's the point in figuring out a killer DPS balance if you can't get past a debuff-loving mid-boss? It's a lot to think about, and should give the game more depth per level than your standard loot-based RPG.

While this all sounds great, Counterplay has yet to show off anything other than the highly-polished combat (which all takes place in small, enclosed arenas). We have questions. What does the hub world look like? Where's the UI? When are we going to learn more about the 'constellation-like' upgrade tree that will define the nuances in how we play? The game was announced almost a year ago, and while it's encouraging to see how engaging and tactile the combat is, and to see more of those intricate, zodiac-inspired armour sets, we can't help but get a little nervous at the fact that this close to launch, we've still only seen one facet of the game.

The DualSense innovations and smart melee combat are all well and good, but will those two features alone be enough to save Godfall from launch-window obscurity and the tag of this new generation's Heavenly Sword? That's not the worst comparison, but let's see more. ■

FACTRICK

1. BLASPHEMY

The final boss is Macros, a 'mad god' who you must depose. There's a lot of fighting before that.

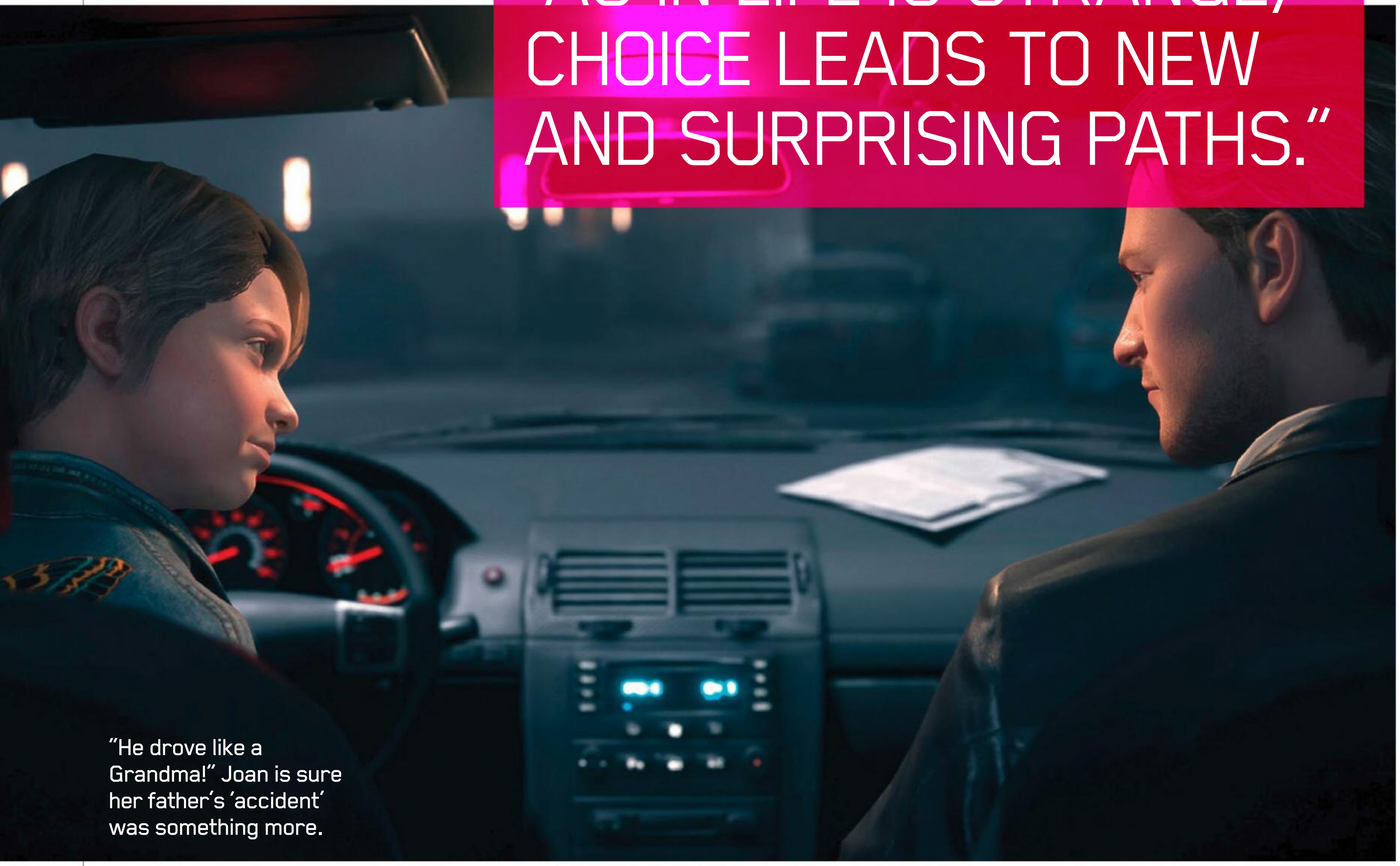
2. THEIR DESTINY

Counterplay Games previously helped with development on a little loot shooter called Destiny.

3. ELEMENTARY

The world of Aperion is split into five distinctive realms: those of Earth, Water, Air, Fire, and Spirit.

“AS IN LIFE IS STRANGE, CHOICE LEADS TO NEW AND SURPRISING PATHS.”



“He drove like a Grandma!” Joan is sure her father’s ‘accident’ was something more.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2020 / **PUB** BANDAI NAMCO / **DEV** DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT

TWIN MIRROR

Two heads are better than one

It’s been over a year since Dontnod teased its mystery adventure, Twin Mirror. You still play as Sam Higgs, you’ve still got your mind palace, and you’re still returning to your hometown in the wake of a tragedy. Game director Florian Desforges tells us tweaks have been made over the past 12 months, however, from refining the story to improving the overall presentation.

The biggest change is the departure from an episodic structure. Head of publishing Xavier Spinat explains, “Episodes implied partial endings and reopenings, and it was breaking some of the rhythm [...] We felt that the game worked better as a single storyline.”

Before attending the funeral of his best friend Nick, Sam makes a pitstop in his mind palace. No longer an assortment of floating islands, it now glistens like a million shards of broken glass.

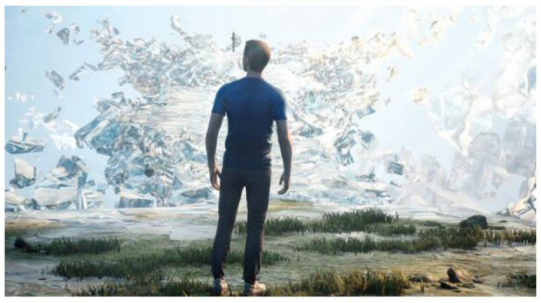
LOST IN THOUGHT

Mystery is at the heart of the game. Narrative director Hélène Henry tells us, “When the game starts, Sam is coming back to face his past choices.”

A spyglass in the real world brings back memories of why Sam left Basswood. We see Anna, his ex, rejecting an earnest but poorly thought-out proposal at the same spot years before. Time passes whenever Sam gets lost in thought. Returning to the present, a text reveals he’s missed Nick’s funeral.

In the car park at the wake, Nick’s daughter Joan confronts Sam for leaving years before. Henry says, “Sam can no longer cut ties and avoid the consequences of his actions.” Joan asks Sam to investigate her father’s death. While deciding whether to do so, we get our first glimpse of the Double. He supports Sam through difficult social situations by offering a contrarian view. If we agree to investigate, The Double argues, we risk exposing young Joan to things about her father a 13-year-old should never know. If we turn her down, we could still investigate discreetly… though she may not appreciate our attempts to shield her if she figures out what we’re up to. There are no right or wrong choices and it’s up to you to write Sam’s story.

As in the developer’s breakout hit Life Is Strange, choice leads to new and surprising paths. A well-chosen word means we can text a character who’d previously been aloof to our questioning. We’ll venture beyond the looking glass later this year. ■



Above Your mind palace, where your memories are stored, now glitters.

on the box

judged only by their covers

COBRA KAI: THE KARATE SAGA CONTINUES

In this Street Fighter cosplay adventure you must craft the perfect Ryu outfit to take on all other Ryus in the world. The twist? One of them’s the real deal. What a Ryu revelation!

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 27 OCT

XIII – LIMITED EDITION

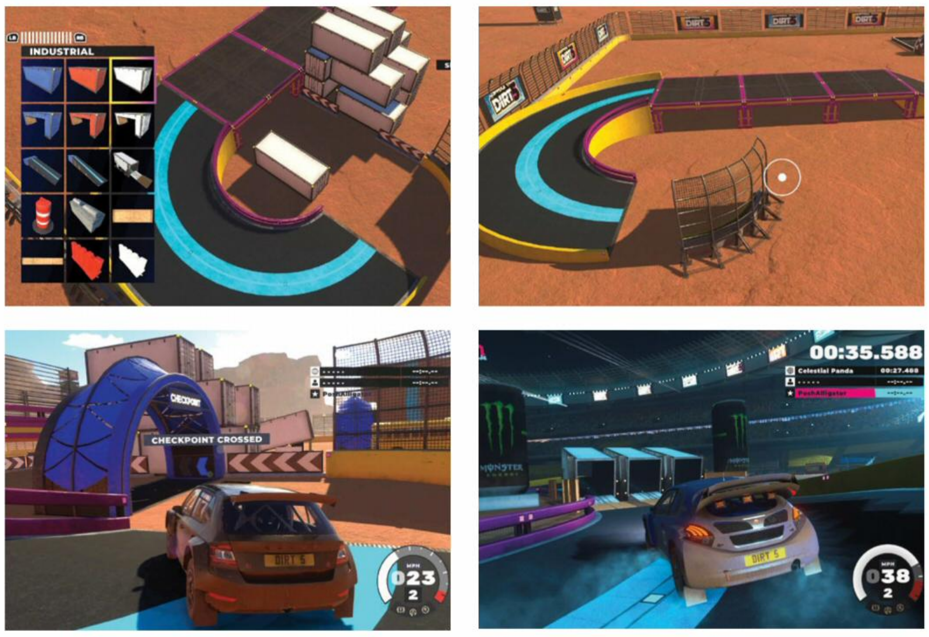
America is under threat from dimensional window panes that are capturing landmarks in their frame-y grasp. Take up arms against the glassy enemy and free America one crack at a time.

FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 10 NOV

MONSTRUM

Pac-Man is reimagined as a ghoulish nightmare creature who’s evolved from chomping pills to chewing on juicy, meaty humans. Clearly, the drugs don’t work for yellow pizza-people.

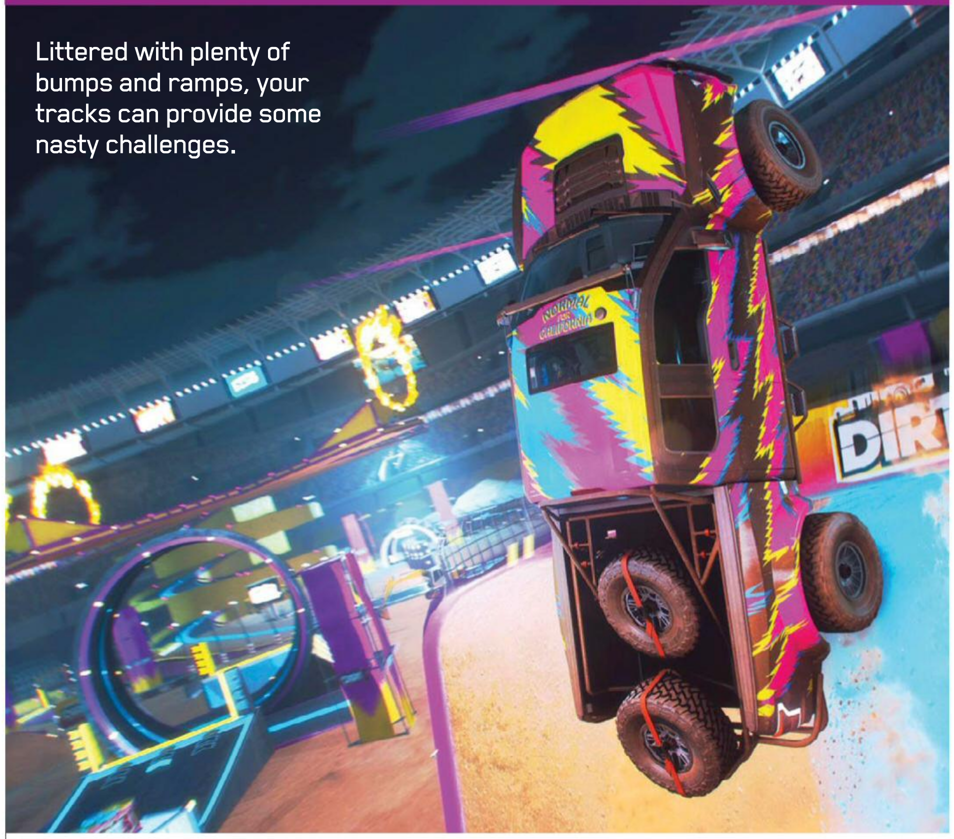
FORMAT PS4 **ETA** 23 OCT



Above Besides track components you can lay down things like sponsorship advertising. Create a Monster Energy Drink maze, why don't you?

Finally, we get the chance to do loop-the-loops and rings of fire from the safety of our own homes.

> "GATE CRASHER IS THE STANDOUT EVENT TYPE, ALLOWING US TO CREATE OBSTACLE COURSES FOR CARS TO GUN DOWN."



Littered with plenty of bumps and ramps, your tracks can provide some nasty challenges.

FORMAT PS4, PS5 / **ETA** 6 NOV (PS4), TBC (PS5)
PUB CODEMASTERS / **DEV** CODEMASTERS

DIRT 5

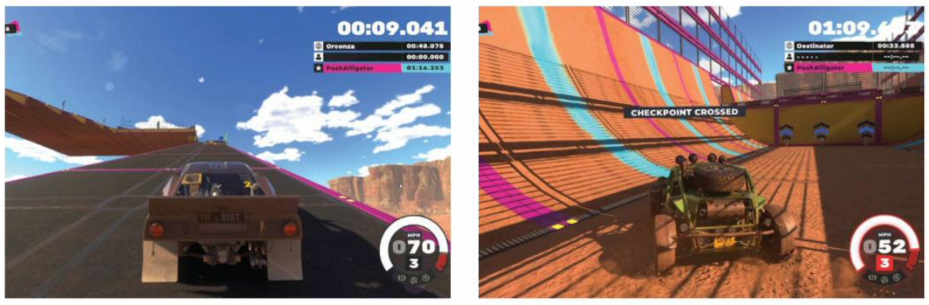
We enjoy a muddy hands-on with Dirt 5's crashingly creative Playgrounds mode

Does your brain get a shot of serotonin whenever you hear the sound of plastic pieces overturning? Almost as alluring as Lego bricks or Hotwheels track pieces is Dirt 5's Playground mode, a level creation mode that offers similar imagination-stimulating creativity in an easy-to-use drag-and-drop editor in the style of, say, classic Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.

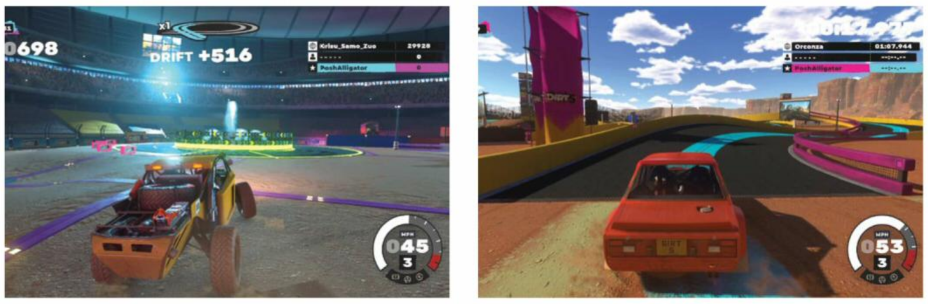
We get to try out a work-in-progress version of the mode, and it's already easy to search through the levels, with multiple categories to highlight different types of stage. Built around using certain vehicles, even the harder Playground levels feel doable, and offer a range of different event types. You'll be able to make and play Gymkhana (scored stunt attack arenas), Smash Attack (destroy inflatable objects against the clock), and Gate Crasher (timed checkpoint challenge) challenges.

CHECKING POINTS

Gate Crasher is the standout event type, allowing us to create obstacle courses and looping lanes for cars to gun down. In some, getting a good time is the challenge, but for others just passing the finish line is challenge enough. Objects are sufficiently varied to allow you to create some really devious courses – as long as you can finish the track yourself to approve it for publication. Dirt 5's main modes will have plenty to keep you engaged, but Playgrounds could give you reason to stick with it for some time to come. ■



Above The sky is literally the limit. There's no need to stick to ground level.



Above Stunt arenas allow you to create some great spaces for tricking.

"THE TEAM HAVE CREATED NEW QUESTS THAT DIG INTO THE WORLD."

FORMAT PS5 / **ETA** 2020 / **PUB** TBC / **DEV** BLOOBER TEAM

OBSERVER: SYSTEM REDUX

Up close with PS5's horror reboot

While *that* cyberpunk game is grabbing all the headlines, and nabbed OPM's cover last issue, this cult classic is getting a PS5 makeover. New missions, cases, and gameplay are just the start of what we can expect from this upgrade to Bloober Team's cult horror sleuth-'em-up.

"Cyberpunk stories and worlds have so much opportunity to tell stories with tiny details," says Piotr Babieno, Bloober Team CEO, as we dig into what's in Observer: System Redux. Specifically, this story is about uncovering the secret lives of murder victims amid the rain-drizzled back alleys of a bleak future Kraków.

As Daniel Lazarski, a detective in the Observer police force, you can hack into people's minds using the Dream Eater to solve crimes. You play through the memories of the deceased to uncover clues to their killer, and use devices to scan biological and electronic objects for leads.

Observer is a puzzle-led psychological horror game where the smallest details combine to create a world dripping in darkly intimidating atmosphere, and PS5 will enable the dev to ladle on more detail.

"By harnessing the power of the next generation of consoles, we can really pack in those small touches that draw players into a more immersive experience," says Babieno. "You could say new technology helped us more fully realise the world of Observer in Observer: System Redux."

Babieno explains that we can expect 4K at 60fps, ray tracing, HDR, global illumination, new models, and improved animations from this next-gen update. He reveals some of PS5's new features have enabled Bloober Team to create new content for the game. "New SSD load times have allowed us to create even more trippy Dream Eater sequences," says the developer, adding, "Being able to shorten load times for levels made it easier to change the environment and, by doing so, to play with the imagination of our players more."

FEEL LUCKY, PUNK?

The team have created new quests that dig into the world of "Dark Cyberpunk", which, says Babieno, "adds nearly 25% more to the length of the original game". This content, which includes fresh cases and mechanics such as stealth for the first time, is woven into the main game so it feels part of the original story and world.

Again, PS5's tech is helping to enhance the gameplay that matters in Observer. "With greater control over the lighting effects, we can use subliminal cues to tell stories that put you on the edge of your seat and really make those super-scary moments stand out," Babieno tells us. ■

FACTRICK

1. LOAD UP

The SSD means faster load time, so there "are no longer places where immersion is broken."

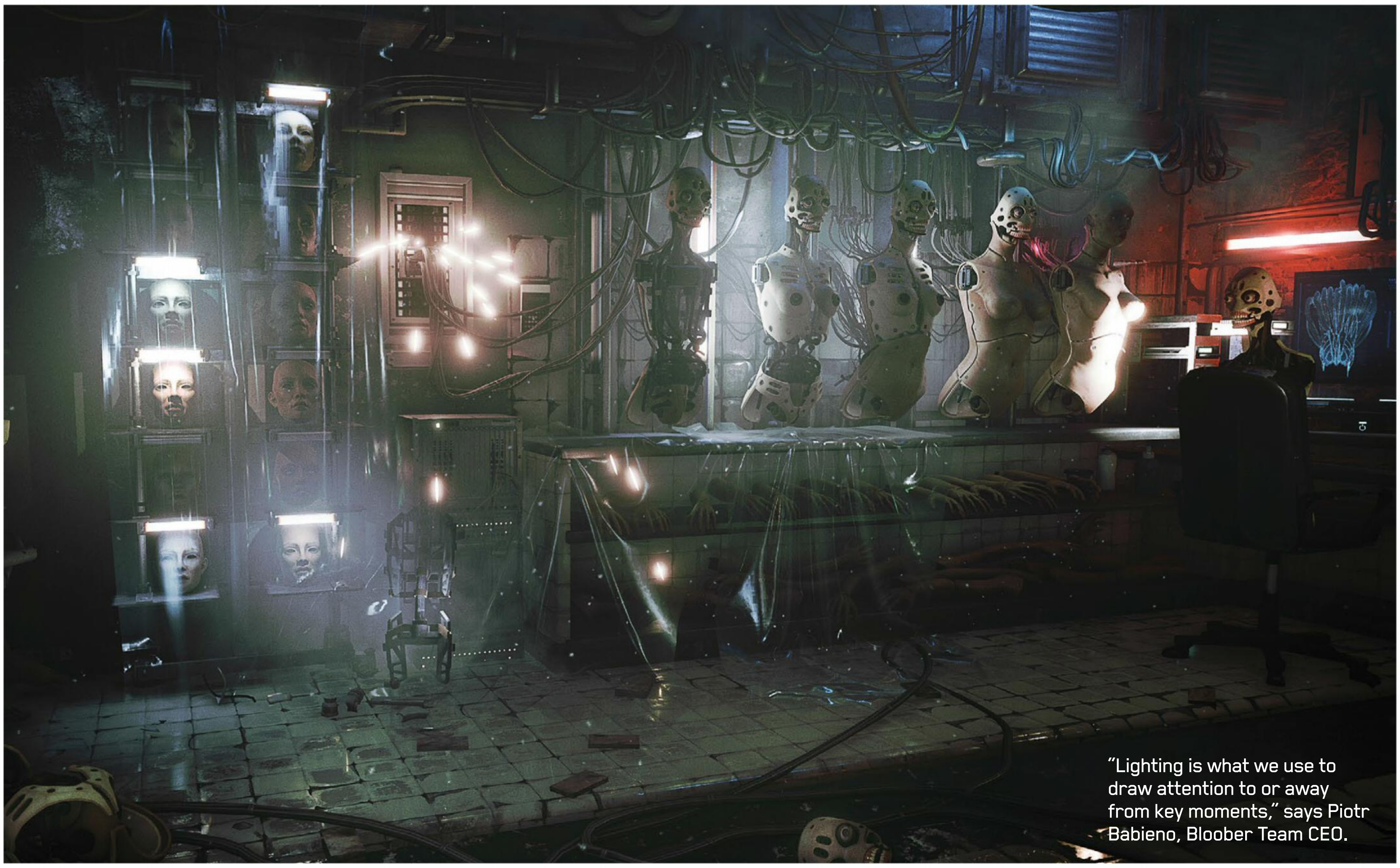
2. MAKES SENSE

"The new DualSense controller options let you feel your surroundings," says Piotr Babieno.

3. CHOICE VOICE

The game's new content has been created from unused voice work by the late Rutger Hauer.

Above New PS5-powered lighting and ray tracing ensures Observer's world is intimidating.



"Lighting is what we use to draw attention to or away from key moments," says Piotr Babieno, Bloober Team CEO.

Case study

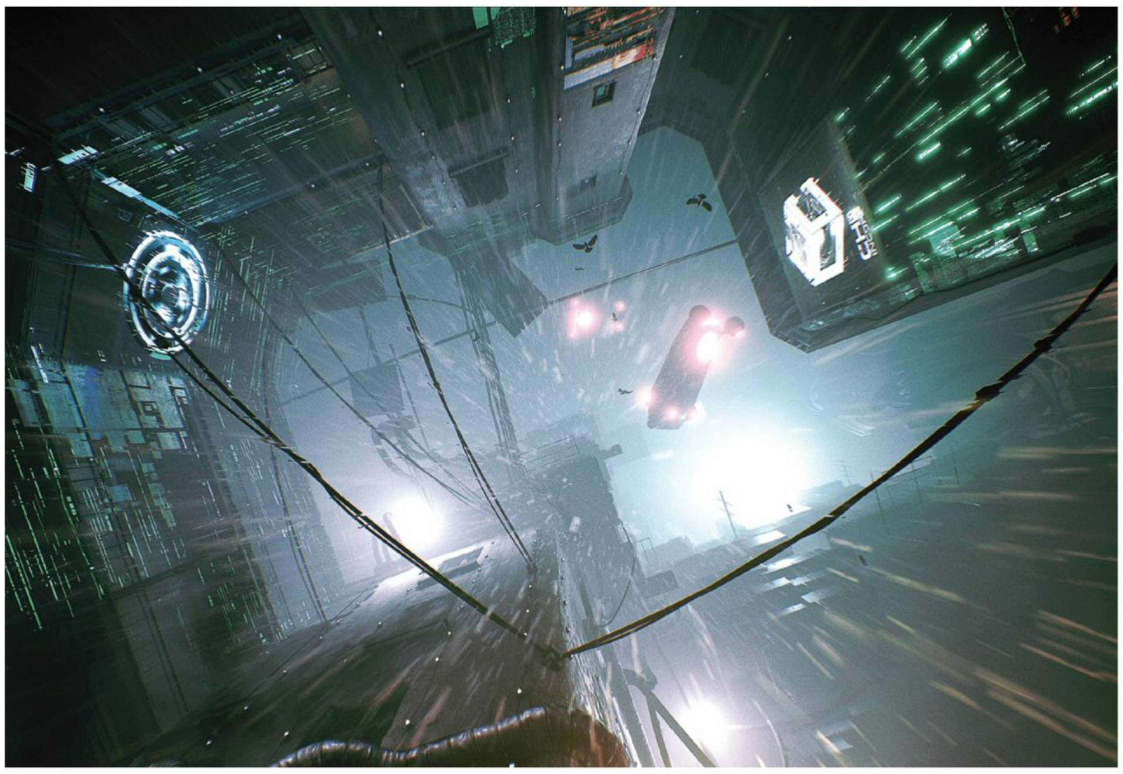
Uncovering the new crime coming to PS5

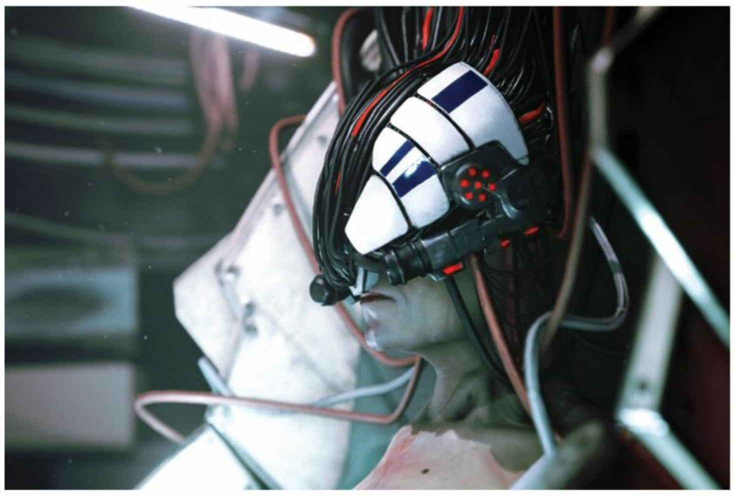
1 One of the new cases, Her Fearful Symmetry, is a psychotic love story featuring dystopian and transhumanist themes. Can you solve it?

2 To uncover clues you must interact with objects in the environment. The game is played in first person and every lead you uncover feels hard-won.

3 Your Bio Vision technology can be used to scan areas of the world for new evidence, some of which will take you in dark and surprising new directions.

4 You can reread the case log, evidence, and clues to gain new angles on a case. You interrogate characters you meet on your quest through dialogue trees.

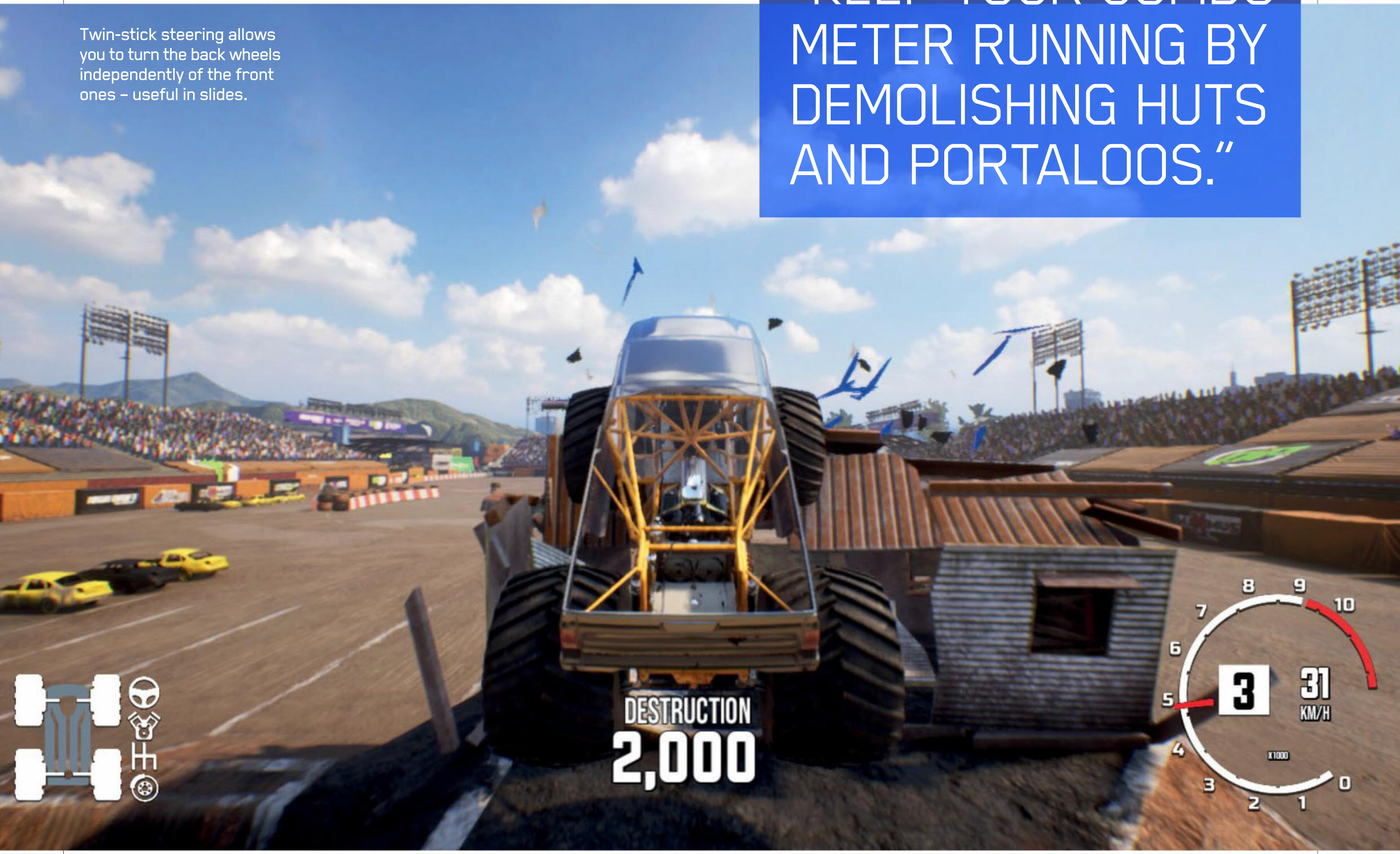




Left This PS5 remaster is soaked in next-gen-powered atmosphere. The lighting and 4K textures are superb.

Above New models and animation have been created to bring Observer up to date for Sony's next gen.

"KEEP YOUR COMBO METER RUNNING BY DEMOLISHING HUTS AND PORTALOOS."


Twin-stick steering allows you to turn the back wheels independently of the front ones – useful in slides.

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** OCT / **PUB** NACON / **DEV** TEYON

MONSTER TRUCK CHAMPIONSHIP

All together: "Driving a truck with my high heels on..."

With a monster truck on the box and a no-nonsense name, you know what you're going to get with Monster Truck Championship. But unlike the arcadey, exaggerated monster truck action we usually see, this game sets out to realistically simulate this very American motorsport. So is crushing cars really as much fun as it looks?

You won't find out straight away, as serious racing is front and centre. While seeing the huge wheels spinning up close with dirt flying is cool, the realism in the driving physics doesn't make the racing particularly frantic. These trucks just love to oversteer, which means tiptoeing around in bumper cam view if you want to finish well. You can race online against up to seven other players, and customise your truck to look its best, but there's no local split-screen so Ghost mode is your only competitive couchplay option.

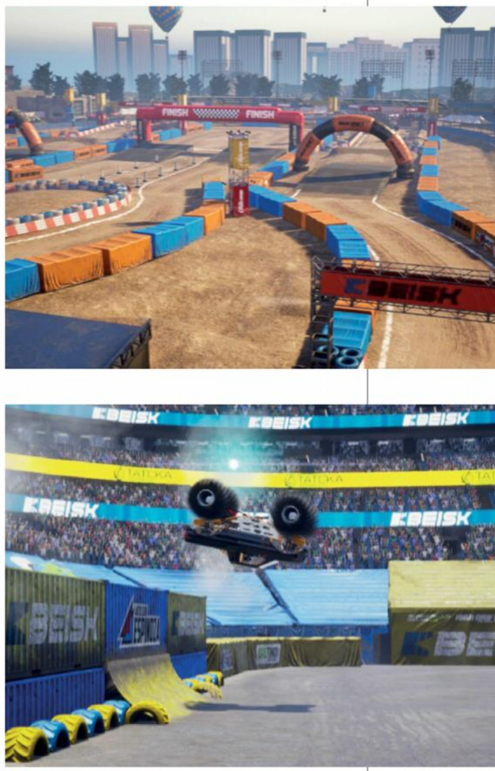
MON-STARS

But hey – racing schmacing, right? Destruction mode is where the real action is, as you chain together feats of environmental carnage, keeping your combo meter running by demolishing wooden huts, portaloos, and caravans, and performing tricks in between. The 'just one more go factor' is here in spades.

Freestyle mode is similar, although the smashing is replaced with ramps that launch you into the air for a somersault. There's a modicum of car damage to contend with throughout the game, but nothing like Monster Jam Steel Titans, and nothing that'll end your race.

Finally, Drag Race mode features the usual optimum RPM target at launch, after which you navigate a couple of corners before the finish line. It makes a change from traditional straight-line drag races, and means even a bad start can be clawed back if you're skilful enough at turning.

With career mode locked off in this preview build, the true depth of the championship remains to be seen. Still, all signs point to it being a decent, if unambitious, racer. And we can answer the question: yes. Crushing cars *is* as much fun as it looks. ■


Above The tracks are arenas around the world, mostly in the USA. Fireworks and a pre-race announcer add to the atmosphere.

"YOU WANT THEME PARK VISITORS LINING UP OUT OF THE DOOR."

There is a dizzying array of options on offer, each one bringing you closer to building the park of your dreams.

FORMAT PS4, PS5 / **ETA** HOLIDAY / **PUB** SOLD OUT
DEV FRONTIER DEVELOPMENTS

PLANET COASTER

It has its ups and downs

An early tooltip tells us that a little bit of fear is necessary for any successful ride – but creating the perfect theme park is all about balance. Scare your customers silly and they won't come back, but bore them to death instead and you may as well throw the tarp over your entire site.

The tension of keeping many plates spinning is what makes the construction and management sim genre so compelling. In our hands-on, we're pushed and pulled by four different advisors, each with their own concerns for our park. You've got to make money, but charge too much and your customers will seek their thrills elsewhere. You want park visitors lining up out of the door, but people get bored waiting in long queues. Besides all that, your best rides can't stay open perpetually, so how will you choose to balance all these spinning plates?

It's not all stress, though – that's just there to keep you, the burgeoning park manager, on your toes. In our hands-on, after being subjected to the views of that opinionated quartet of advisors in the tutorial, we are then let loose with unlimited dosh. The science fantasy park we build, complete with breathing dragon animatronics alongside costumed robo-staff, castles, and spaceships, would likely never be a viable venture in the real world but that doesn't mean we can't dream. ■

Above Each coaster needs to complete a test run before you open it to the public.

With a little help

Meet three of your park advisors

Oswald B. Thompson

Good! And now... ope

1 Whimsical park owner Oswald B Thompson walks you through the basics and believes that theme parks are all about crafting memories.

Cynthia Clarke

That's right! Take a g
what we need to alter

2 Chief Financial Officer Cynthia Clarke reckons everything has a price, repeatedly encouraging you to raise your entry fees as your park's rating increases.

Lucy Summers

C'mon, admit it - isn
see that the ride's Q
up as a result.

3 Theme park influencer Lucy Summers has many followers and knows how to create buzz. She encourages you to ask park visitors what they want.

The game's playable alone or with friends – even going solo allows for enjoyable chaos.

"WE USE OUR ANOMALY SKILLS AS FREQUENTLY AS WE USE OUR GUNS."

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** Q4 2020 / **PUB** SQUARE ENIX / **DEV** PEOPLE CAN FLY

OUTRIDERS

Bringing superpowers to a gunfight

Yes, there is cover in Outriders, but it wouldn't be accurate to call it a cover shooter. During our hands-on, we only spend a fraction of our time ducking behind the ol' waist-highs, our moments of catching our breath brief. Instead, the shooting is much closer to that in something like Vanquish, rewarding electric daredevil activity with bounteous advantages, not least of all recovering health. To cower behind cover in Outriders is to die slowly – only by meeting enemies in a blaze of glory will you be able to live forever.

During cryosleep, your Outrider (chosen from four classes) was given special powers by the Anomaly, an electrical storm ravaging the planet Enoch and putting a spanner in the space-age works of humanity's efforts to settle there.

POWER TRIP

But don't mistake those Anomaly skills for mere ultimate attacks (as the parlance goes). No, during our hands-on we use those skills as frequently as we use the guns – and that's a lot. It's like having your super in Destiny 2 active *all* the time. And that's rad. (Though this isn't a Destiny-like 'game as a service'; the focus here is on a completable story with replayability baked in). You can equip three of these skills (from a selection of eight, earned at higher levels, in the build we played) to activate using L1, R1, or a combination of both. They all have fairly short cooldown timers, meaning you're able to rotate through all your class' unique skills at a decent clip.

The Trickster zips across the battlefield teleporting behind enemies, throwing time-slowing daggers and creating slow-down bubbles, while the Devastator encases themself in stone, creates a series of earthquakes, and leaps into the air, selects a target, and smashes their stony self into a group of enemies – and that feels fantastic. They're joined by the flame-spewing Pyromancer and the newly announced Technomancer, who summons turrets and rocket launchers to freeze and poison enemies. As all the players' powers come together, the battlefield really becomes chaotic. "From the beginning we wanted the skills to be almost as important as guns. So, there's a 50/50% balance in gameplay," shares creative director Bartek Kmita.

While the fights are electric, the funnelling between them is straightforward, and as the world tier system pushes us to harder difficulties for better loot we find enemy captains become quite bullet-spongey. We love using our powers to own the battlefield, but even good things can become a slog with enough repetition. Whether Outsiders slips in this regard, we'll have to wait and see. ■

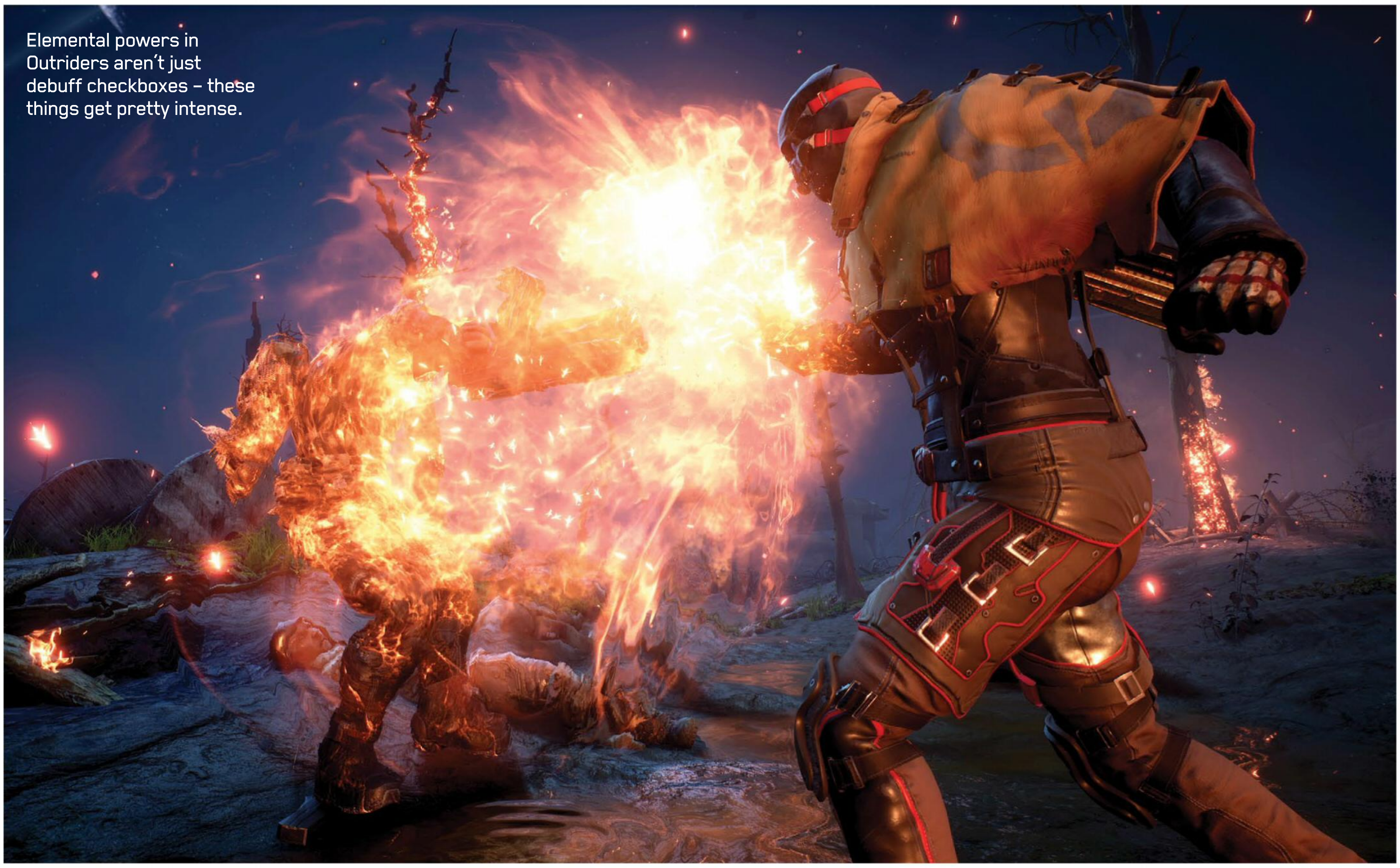
FACTRICK

1. CRAFT CLUB
Crafting can improve rarity, level up, attach mods, raise attributes, or swap variants on your gear.

2. PIMP MY RIDE
Key to the story is traversing Enoch with your pals on your truck, which you can customise.

3. WORLD SHAKER
Difficulty is adaptable. The better you do, the higher the world tiers you unlock, giving you better loot.

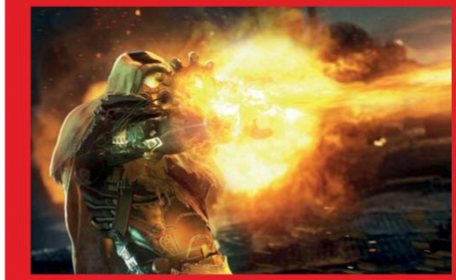
Above The story has you pushing into Enoch's Anomaly-ravaged wilds, taking your pals around in a truck-base, coming up against monsters.



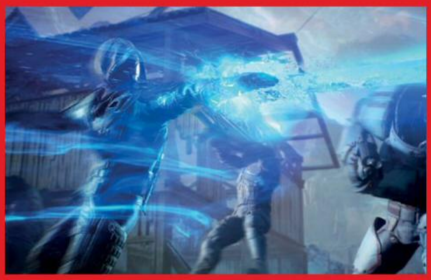
Elemental powers in Outriders aren't just debuff checkboxes – these things get pretty intense.

Calling the class register

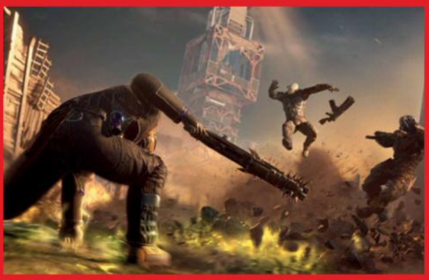
The four types of Outrider you could become...



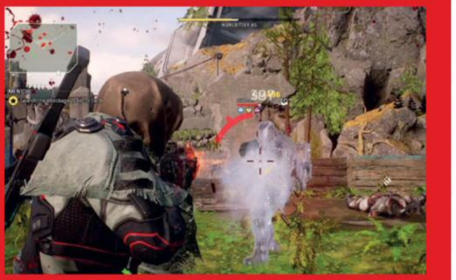
1 The Pyromancer does what it says on the tin: mances some flames. Erect walls of fire, cause enemies to catch alight. Crowd control options are plentiful.



2 The Trickster's movement options mean you can zip around taking out enemies, from teleporting behind them to throwing slow-debuffing bubbles.



3 The Devastator is the tank, using rocks to throw themself into the thick of action, shaking the battlefield with earthquakes and leaping to cause tremors.



4 The supportive Technomancer drops handy turrets and heals teammates, and also summons rocket launchers, freeze bombs, and toxic bullets from the air.

Left Some battlefield areas can contain a lot of enemies, and in these cases you need to make sure you find and use cover urgently.

Above You can take on and track some side-quests from the hub camps, but you also stumble upon extra zones as you go along.

PREVIEW ROUND-UP

There's plenty to ponder here as we start to walk the line from PS4 to PS5: everything from a heap of fresh tactical gameplay to others that celebrate cultures we'd love to see represented more in gaming

RAJI: AN ANCIENT EPIC

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2020
PUB SUPER.COM
DEV NODDING HEADS GAMES

Set in India and based on Hindu and Balinese mythology, Raji feels fresh just by virtue of the Indian developers exploring a culture that isn't well represented in gaming. When demons invade under the command of demon king Mahabalasura, Raji is separated from her brother, and must find him and put an end to the demons' plot.

Super-fluid platforming has Raji clambering over beautiful environments and battling demons using her godly gifts, switching from her area-of-effect Sharanga bow to a handy trishul trident with flashy effects as appropriate. ■

WRAITH: THE OBLIVION – AFTERLIFE

FORMAT PS VR / **ETA** 2021 / **PUB** FAST TRAVEL GAMES
DEV FAST TRAVEL GAMES

This PS VR horror is set within the World Of Darkness, meaning it shares a setting with Vampire: The Masquerade. Playing as a wraith, you explore the spooky Barclay mansion as you uncover the truth behind your own death, utilising your ghoulish powers to find clues. Your abilities include controlling objects from a distance, walking through walls, and using wraith senses to track other spirits – who may not be all they seem, of course.

SAKUNA: OF RICE AND RUIN

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 20 NOV
PUB MARVELOUS GAMES
DEV EDELWEISS

Don't count your rice before it's grown. 'Spoiled' harvest goddess Sakuna learns this the hard way and ends up banished to an island where she meets other, human, outcasts. Connecting with this community, you need to rediscover what it means to be a harvest goddess. The better your harvests, the stronger you become, enabling you to explore the island and fight demons in side-scrolling fashion using farm tools as weapons. Help the community, and they'll help you get better gear. It's a delightfully unusual twist on Japanese mythology that should yield a fine crop indeed. ■

TRANSFORMERS: BATTLEGROUNDS

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 23 OCT
PUB OUTRIGHT GAMES
DEV COATSINK SOFTWARE

Taking cues from the recent Transformers: Cyberverse TV show, Battlegrounds is a tactical warfare adventure that pits Bumblebee and the Autobots against Megatron and the Decepticons. This time, though, it's up to you to help take command.

With a colourful aesthetic that celebrates the toy roots of the Transformers, this is the kind of tactical game that even kids can get into, which is no bad thing for anyone who can find some titles in the genre a little complex. As the first Transformers game on PS4 since Activision's licence expired five years ago, we're looking forward to rolling out with this one. ■

BLOOD BOWL 3

FORMAT PS4, PS5
ETA EARLY 2021 / **PUB** NACON
DEV CYANIDE STUDIO

Thought you knew fantasy football? Think again. *This* is fantasy football, featuring humans, orcs, elves, and more battling it out in an American-football-inspired game within the Warhammer world (it's based on a tabletop game).

Strategy's the important thing as you step into the pantaloons of a team's coach, setting up plays and directing your players to tackle opponents, break through, and nab touchdowns. But, as the name suggests, things can get bloody – kicks, punches, and even fantasy weapons are all permitted. Play unwisely and it could be the end of your star player. ■

UNTIL YOU FALL

FORMAT PS VR
ETA AUTUMN 2020
PUB SCHELL GAMES
DEV SCHELL GAMES

This PS VR game has you battling foes as a Rune Knight 'Sword God' until, well, you fall. And then you start again. It's a combat-focussed roguelite that places you in the neon fantasy world of Rokar. There's a variety of melee weapons, from scimitars to maces, which you can dual-wield. Each one handles differently and has its own abilities. Large swings deal more damage, but you need to keep your hands close to parry enemy strikes. Each time you fall, you can try again, more powered-up than before. This could be one of PS VR's greats. ■

NOUR: PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

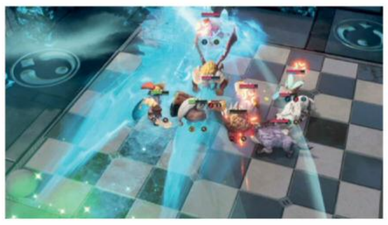
FORMAT PS5 / **ETA** TBC / **PUB** PANIC
DEV TERRIFYING JELLYFISH

With a name derived from the word 'nourish' this is an interactive and experimental experience dedicated to our shared love of marvelling over digital recreations of food (something we very much enjoy doing). Nour boasts over 20 'vignettes' with reactive music. What do you do? Just play with the food! The selection on offer looks great and even has pancake wobble as you slap creations together. With endless toasters and towering burgers, things promise to get strange too. On PS5 it'll make use of the DualSense to, for example, emulate the feel of cutting fruit with a knife. When you're done you can snap a picture and share it with friends. ■

KAZE AND THE WILD MASKS

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 2020
PUB SOEDESCO
DEV VOX GAME STUDIO

Looking like a cross between Sonic and Klonoa, this colourful indie is channelling all the power of '90s platformers. To save her friend Hogo, bunny Kaze travels through the Crystal Islands, which sport multiple elemental biomes (naturally). Jumping, Kaze can twirl her ears around in a kind of spin jump (remind you of anyone?), and taking a carrot from Wonder Boy's allotment, she can use the masks of the title to call on the abilities of a tiger, lizard, shark, and eagle. We're wiping away a tear of nostalgia with every spin-jump Kaze performs. ■



AUTO CHESS

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** 31 OCT
PUB DRAGONEST
DEV DRAGONEST

What if chess were like a MOBA? And what if you didn't actually have to control that chess MOBA? Complete this series of mental leaps and you have Auto Chess, by the developer which popularised this 'auto battler' genre with the original PC DOTA 2 mod.

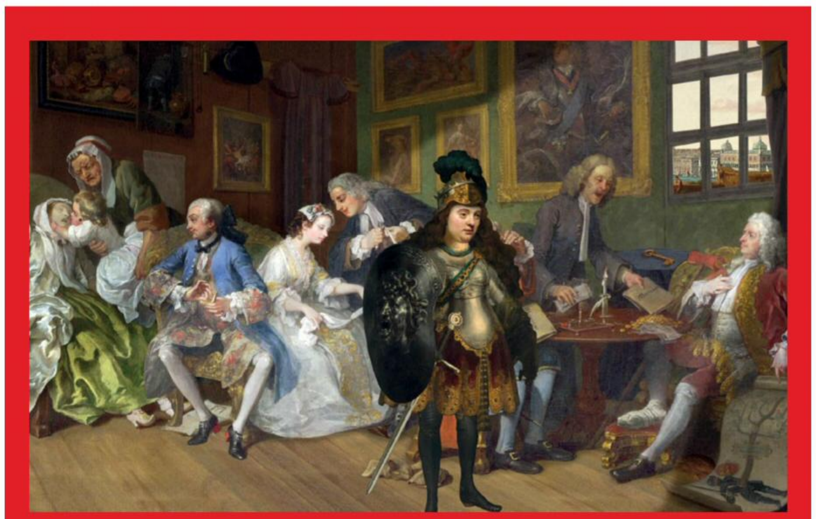
The results are akin to a competitive tower defence game with a ton of depth. Each match has you drafting heroes and putting them into an arena to try to win a round, with the loser taking damage. You then have the opportunity to adjust and improve your team to go for the win, starting fresh with a new team each match. Devilishly compelling. ■

LEMNIS GATE

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** EARLY 2021 / **PUB** FRONTIER FOUNDRY / **DEV** RATLOOP GAMES CANADA

There are a lot of shooters out there, so a game's really got to be something special to feel fresh. Luckily, Lemnis Gate has a 25-second pitch that might sell you on it. That's because 25 seconds is how long each round in a match takes as players battle other in 1v1 and 2v2 arena matches.

Over the course of your round you get to take an action, whether that's manoeuvring your up-to-five-strong team, taking shots at enemies, or setting up ambushes for later. It's all a little mind-bending, though – with only 25 seconds for each round you can't overthink it. ■



THE PROCESSION TO CALVARY

FORMAT PS4 / **ETA** Q4 2020/Q1 2021 / **PUB** DIGERATI
DEV JOE RICHARDSON

This Pythonesque comedy point-and-click adventure is the work of a UK-based solo developer. The works of Michelangelo, Bosch, and Rembrandt have been animated to create chaotic, absurd situations such as discovering a tall lady is really three people stacked on top of each other under a puffy dress. You play as an unnamed heroine attempting to hunt down Heavenly Peter, solving puzzles Monkey-Island-style as you go. Delightfully silly.

PUYO PUYO TETRIS 2

FORMAT PS4, PS5 / **ETA** 8 DEC (PS4)
PUB SEGA / **DEV** SEGA

We loved the way the first game in this series blended together Tetris and Puyo Puyo in a way that made both puzzle formats feel fresh. This followup adds a world-hopping adventure mode, and a Skill Battle mode that allows you to use special moves and item cards depending on your character.

In the wake of the esports-focussed Puyo Puyo Champions, this sequel also features enhanced online modes to support league play across its various modes (including four-player and ranked). Versus, Fusion, Swap, Party, and Big Bang modes are joined by Tournament and Lesson modes for everyone from the Puyo-literate to Tetronomino-newbies. ■

WAR GA

Ian Dean and Leon Hurley pull on their Reebok Pumps, push play on Hall & Oates, and embrace the 1980s thrill of **Call Of Duty: Black Ops – Cold War**

We don't yet know how this year's Call Of Duty will end, but we do know this: it's entirely up to you. Raven Software, the studio behind the game's single-player campaign, is building a player-led story where what ultimately happens is entirely down to the decisions you make.

Set in the 1980s (with flashbacks to 1968 Vietnam), Black Ops – Cold War is a direct sequel to the first Black Ops and sees Woods, Hudson, and Mason reunited to find Perseus, a real-life Russian spy. It oozes '80s espionage cool as the team shoot their way through locations such as Ukraine, Laos, Moscow, Berlin, and Turkey in search of the legendary Soviet agent.

"One of the things early on the guys cracked was this idea of vintage through a modern lens," says Raven's Dan Vondrak as he reveals the lengths the team went to nail the perfect '80s vibe. "We're really inspired by some of those [films]

MLES

It wouldn't be Call Of Duty without gripping cut-scenes and explosive set-pieces.

like Atomic Blonde or Narcos; they took that approach of looking at vintage through a modern lens in a cool way."

PERFECT COCKTAIL

It's a tone that requires careful balancing. The studio's whiteboard had Miami Vice and Red Dawn at one end, and Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy at the other. Discovering Cold War's feel took time, particularly as the '80s were relatively recent.

Ronald Reagan is just one of a number of real-life, historical figures set to appear in the game.

"[Because] we're not in the future any more, you can actually get these things. And that's been a huge thing. You can go out and say, 'What did a guy look like in the '80s?' Well, we can go and build that, which means that it's going to look even better, down to the stitching, down to the gear that's there," says Treyarch's creative specialist Miles Leslie. "So the characters are really going to pop and I think players are going to be pretty satisfied [to go] from Modern Warfare to ours in terms of that level of detail."

The visual fidelity has been aided by Infinity Ward's work on last year's Call Of Duty, particularly the use of photogrammetry to scan people and objects into the game for heightened realism. "We're really pushing photogrammetry. [...] I think going into the '80s in the Cold War era has really invigorated and excited all the teams, about going to a place where you can feel it and see it. That's allowed a [new] level of immersion and detail.

The team can see what Reagan looked like, they can go see how many wrinkles he has on his face. "Hey, you know he had one little wrinkle here," says Leslie, rubbing the corner of his eye. "Let's get that in."

> "I DON'T THINK WE WANT THE PLAYER TO KNOW THEY'RE IN A GAME."

There's a level of realism in Cold War that means, according to Leslie, you can't even tell when you're playing the game or experiencing a cinematic. Leslie explains: "Am I in the game? Am I not in the game? To us that's really exciting, because I

don't think we want the player to know they're in a game. We just want them to have the experience. It's like you don't want to see those walls. You never want to run into that invisible wall."

TOP GUN

What we've seen looks like good Call Of Duty: tight gunplay, great action, and set-pieces that would make Nathan Drake whistle though his teeth as the dust settles. Black Ops' history of delivering bombastic events is in evidence, but Raven is blurring the lines between playing and watching these moments explode across the screen. "[We] make the huge crazy moments, but wherever we can, [we] give the player a little more control over that," outlines Vondrak. "So along with the graphics and what we can push with all the lighting and the shadows, it's amazing how immersive these whole sequences are, and you don't even know when you're going in between moments as sometimes you have control and sometimes you don't."

Like last year's Modern Warfare there's a more 'real' feel that suggests a more grounded take. It's got the same visual sheen as Captain Price's return as well, with the same new engine 'wow' that sees levels rendered at cutscene levels of prettiness.

This is partly because the three teams share technology. In a sense, Leslie and Vondrak say, Cold War was always going to have one foot in the next gen because they're pushing the limits of what PS4 can achieve. On current tech Cold War is a looker, on PS5 it threatens to define what a shooter should be. As with the use of photogrammetry, this year's developers are taking what Infinity Ward did with Modern Warfare's handling and controls, and pushing it on, in a very '80s way. Guns again feel weighty but Cold War leans into the analogue feel of the era.

THE REAL THING

Cold War is embracing the tech inside PS5 in every way possible

"We are going to have 120Hz […], we want to make sure it's at 60 frames per second," says Leslie who tells us marrying technology to the game they want to make is where the next-gen magic happens. "It's about telling the right story and narrative from the campaign side to the multiplayer side, but I think immersion and a cinematic feel, right, and that butter-smooth 60 frames per second, things players expect, we're trying to take and enhance, with that at 120Hz, taking the haptics, whatever we can do so that players feel like they're getting the right next-gen experience."

Leslie explains: "The phone did one thing and it was big, […]

»

"IT'S AMAZING HOW IMMERSIVE THESE WHOLE SEQUENCES ARE."

There's a satisfying heft to the guns – a real analogue feel.

JUST DO IT, WITH FRIENDS

Connected and larger than ever: Cold War's three-pillared multiplayer mode could be the series' best yet

While Raven makes the single-player campaign, Treyarch is looking after the multiplayer. Leslie tells us Cold War's multiplayer mode has three main pillars: Deniable Operations; a variety of locations and maps; and cross-gen cross-play.

Deniable Operations are the missions you didn't know about, designed to test your skill beyond anything you may find in the single-player campaign. Creative specialist Miles Leslie says: "We're sending elite operators into places no-one knew. And again, that historical reality is touching on history. So if players look this up, they might get that conspiracy feeling; like whoa, did that actually happen?"

Scale and variety is something else Cold War's multiplayer will embrace. Offline the campaign is heading around the world, so it's no surprise to hear we'll be globetrotting in multiplayer. "The variety of maps is huge for us in terms of experiences and set-pieces. Going back to the campaign, these guys are going everywhere, right? So it was really easy for us to go, 'Oh, you guys are going there? We want to go there on the multiplayer side too'. And there's a lot of sharing of things like assets and locales, which is exciting."

The third pillar is "connectedness" says Leslie. This means you'll be playing across PS4 and PS5, and all other platforms. The aim is to make Cold War the most accessible multiplayer game possible. It sounds like this idea will run across single-player and Warzone, which will have Cold War-themed content, as well as multiplayer. "If you want more and get that depth and connectedness across the game, we're going to give you that," says Leslie.

Whatever sort of multplayer you prefer, you'll find something to tempt you to team up with friends.

everything is purpose-built. The weapons are the same, your AK does this [one thing] but then the exciting thing [is] how you can customise that on top of the loadouts, even in the campaign, and how you're building these guns for the mission. We want them to feel weighty and real and have that immersion, that cinematic feeling [we talked about earlier] as it feels like you're actually firing these weapons."

LOOK WHO'S STALKING

Technology aside, Raven's Vondrak tells us the studio's take on Black Ops is "pushing boundaries". Tapping into its history of action RPGs (Marvel's Ultimate Alliance) and shooters (the underrated Singularity) Raven has built player choice into the game. From simple dialogue options and decision-making to entire levels that have an almost Hitman feel to the open-ended way you can complete them, Raven's Cold War campaign is literally taking us to places Call Of Duty has never fully been before.

One mission, set in the KGB's Lubyanka building, sees you undercover, attempting to take out a target without firing a bullet. You can poison him, blackmail him, bribe a prisoner to kill him during interrogation – it's up to you.

"In some cases, we know the player would have to actually replay their mission to find all this stuff," shares Vondrak. The game is being paced to ease us into this new direction. The familiar rollercoaster thrill ride is present in the early missions, then we begin to find new secrets, alternate paths, new ways to approach a task. In part, the later missions have been inspired by the large maps of Warzone.

"We start sprinkling in that choice," says Vondrak. "It's not something we could just throw into play right away. So we slowly dole it out and try to piece it out. And then towards the end, you really have some very nonlinear missions. [We] can continue to push this moving forward."

Some levels are pure Call Of Duty – exploding cars pinwheeling down roads during daring escapes, for example – but there are key decisions to be made. Everything from simple dialogue options where you can choose to threaten or soothe prisoners to game-altering changes that will ultimately decide the game's ending.

Vondrak confirms to us there will be multiple endings, and also that actions can affect what happens in later missions, so there are layers of cause and effect. At the end of the

The choices you make will affect how things play out – though guns will always be a choice.

The setting makes rivalries clear: East versus West, democracy versus communism.

game you're made aware of how your choices affected the story. "We want to make it really clear, the different choices you made or didn't make, and how those affected the world and the characters around you."

It's also about what you don't do. There will be two optional side-missions in Cold War, and which you choose to do, or not do, will make a difference. The game is "breaking out of the normal traditional Call Of Duty structure," says Vondrak.

STRANGER THINGS

One mission that combines this idea with the classic Black Ops tropes of mind control and uncertainty is a flashback mission to Vietnam. It looks like some clue vital to Perseus is trapped in a lost memory and you revisit the war under what appears to be hypnotic regression. As you replay the battle, new memories unlock with mind-bending results as doors appear in the jungle or you walk through a frozen battle. "Our goal with this level was to create a mission structure that no one has seen before in Call Of Duty," says Vondrak. "We allow the player to choose from many different paths as they dig through [their] shadowy memories. As the player makes choices and dives deeper into their memories the level will actually reset itself, offering new encounters and new experiences."

> "WE ALLOW THE PLAYER TO CHOOSE FROM MANY DIFFERENT PATHS."

Basically the weight of deciding the fate of the world is on your shoulders. Still, at least one mission suggests a lighter tone has crept into the world of plausible deniability. It sees you infiltrate a Russian facility that turns out to be a recreation of an American town being used for invasion practice. From a videogame arcade to über-'80s shop signs, there's a Stranger Things vibe to the whole setup, something that's only enhanced by Pat Benatar's Hit Me With Your Best Shot pumping out the speakers as all hell breaks loose.

The '80s setting has even had an influence on Raven's approach to interaction. Rather than going through the motions of gathering evidence, Vondrak reveals you'll need to solve puzzles to unlock intel. "I was like, dude, if this was, if this was an '80s game, you would have to solve some kind of puzzle. People thought I was crazy," he tells us. "[Now] you have to use the evidence to solve these puzzles and that'll unlock a different part of the side-mission, so even here we wanted to make a call back to the '80s."

Treyarch's Leslie says the new direction captures the momentum of the Black Ops series. Black Ops 2, for example, had a limited branching narrative. "This culmination of ideas and experiences are crystallised and harnessed into Cold War, so you've got some RPG and some action. [...] We're throwing in all the experience-ingredients into the pie and what comes out of the oven is Black Ops — Cold War, which hopefully is gonna be super-tasty." ■

FEEL THE POWER

PS5 developers share how the **DualSense** will allow us to *feel* fully immersed in their games

What's inside PlayStation 5's case is certainly important (we've enthused about its ray tracing, 3D audio, variable frequency CPU, and custom SSD enough already), but what you hold in your hands might be even more crucial. The DualSense is engineered to subtly immerse you in games in ways never felt to this level before.

KEY

ADAPTIVE TRIGGERS

HAPTIC FEEDBACK

From haptic feedback to the adaptive triggers and everything in between, you'll have the next generation in your hands before you even turn your PlayStation 5 on. But how will that affect how games feel? Whether it's sensing the weight of the sword in your character's hands, or the rain on the windscreen of a car, the DualSense has the potential to put us in the game. Read on…

DEMON'S SOULS

Some eyebrows were raised at the news that one of PS5's most exciting games – a launch title if retail leaks are to be believed – will be a remake of an 11-year-old PS3 game. But that game is Demon's Souls, the hard-as-a-nailed-gauntlet FromSoftware game that began the whole soulsborne subgenre.

Built around careful, considered combat with weight and impact, Demon's Souls is a fantastic game to showcase the DualSense controller's haptic feedback. Sword strikes and spellcasting will have different sensations through the adaptive triggers, and you'll be able to *feel* a perfectly parried attack reverberate through your fingers. Success will be felt, not seen.

Even pulling a lever to open a gate will result in a distinctive sensation in your palms. "This is something that rumble could never do," shares Gavin Moore, SIE Japan Studio's creative director. "Haptics [are] integral to the experience, to immersing the player in the world and adding to the gameplay. The visual, aural, and tactile working together takes this new generation of gaming into the future."

RATCHET & CLANK: RIFT APART

Shooting of a less magical but equally explosive kind is central to the return of Ratchet and Clank in the descriptively pun-tacular Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart. The duo are debuting on PS5 with a massive arsenal of wild and inventive weaponry, and the way you interact with those guns is now more personal than ever.

Talking about how Insomniac Games is utilising the adaptive triggers for this chaotic platform-shooter, creative director Marcus Smith shares: "The Enforcer is a dual-barrelled shotgun-type weapon. As you pull the trigger, you'll fire from one barrel, and you can feel resistance around halfway down the trigger. Need a bigger blast? Pull the trigger through that resistance point and you'll fire both barrels at the same time."

MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN: MILES MORALES

Combat is the focus of this web-swinging launch title, and Insomniac Games is giving us a taste of how we'll use the DualSense in Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales. It slides us into Miles' spandex, allowing us to feel what's it's like to be an electrically-charged wall-crawling superhero.

Insomniac reveals that when you hold down □ to use Miles' Venom Blasts in a fight, you'll feel a crackling sensation on the left side of the controller as it builds up, which then shifts to the controller's right side when you release it.

The team tease something similar for Miles' stealth ability, as well as confirming you'll be able to tell where attacks are coming from as enemies swarm Miles through the haptic feedback. "Because of the high resolution of DualSense wireless controller's haptics system, we can really push the dimensionality of the feedback," says creative director Brian Horton.

Feel the magic

More of what to expect from DualSense…

SACKBOY: A BIG ADVENTURE

Sumo Digital's Ned Waterhouse says the DualSense will allow you to feel what Sackboy feels. He mentions a "weapon mode" on R2 that will allow the adaptive triggers to offer feedback when Sackboy uses a grappling hook, and also convey a sense of tension when he's carrying an object around the stage.

GODFALL

Check OPM #179 for our deep dive into how Godfall uses the DualSense controller. Counterplay Games' Keith Lee says you can tell weapons apart by feel rather than having to look at the UI, and, similar to Marvel's Spider-Man: Miles Morales, you can use haptic feedback to sense where enemies are in relation to you.

HORIZON FORBIDDEN WEST

While the development team hasn't said much about the bow yet (despite a bow and arrow's use of adaptive triggers being a focal point of PS5's first official advertisement), Guerilla has teased plenty of new weapons for her to use in this sequel, and the adaptive triggers will ensure each feels unique.

DEATHLOOP

As Deathloop's an FPS, guns play a big role in the action, and that's where the DualSense helps to bring everything to life. It'll make different guns feel distinct from one another, and provide additional feedback – for example, by locking up if your current weapon jams, so you know you have to do something about it, and quickly.

QUANTUM ERROR

TeamKill Media has big ideas for its sci-fi horror in which you play a fireman. The DualSense will deliver everything from gunshot vibration to different haptic feedback depending on how an enemy hurts you. Plus, the studio is experimenting with enabling you to discern whether a door could result in a backdraught by feeling it with the controller.

GHOSTWIRE: TOKYO

The sense of space will be crucial in Tango Gameworks' first-person horror brawler-magical-finger-shooter adventure. Playing like a hectic blend of The Exorcist and Doom, Ghostwire: Tokyo will use the DualSense's adaptive triggers to enliven the sort of ever-forward combat we love in Doom Eternal.

"We're […] looking at ways to take advantage of the adaptive triggers to express a sense of persistent energy," explains the director, Kenji Kimura. The devs are keen to emphasise that haptic feedback doesn't just enable you to feel *more*, but to feel more acutely. "This way we can offer players very detailed, textured nuances," says Kimura, allowing for everything from large-scale vibration to little touches here and there. Given the game's built around using hand gestures to magically strike the ghostly ghouls and demons haunting Tokyo's photoreal streets, this use of the controller feels like a match made in heaven (and hell).

GRAN TURISMO 7

Another giant from PlayStation's back catalogue will be arriving on PS5 and reminding us all just how many options Sony's got in the bag when it wants to pull out a major franchise to launch a new console.

As Gran Turismo 7 pulls out of the garage it's clear it's been made for the DualSense, and for a console generation that puts texture and perception at the forefront of how we experience games.

Kazunori Yamauchi, Polyphony Digital's president, shares his favourite use of the adaptive triggers in Sony's premier racing sim, revealing how he's particularly keen on the way the game simulates anti-lock braking (ABS). In real-world racing ABS usually releases pressure over time, giving it a distinct feel when you operate the pedal, which can be replicated on the trigger. It's no mere novelty: "It will allow the player to accurately feel and understand the relationship between the braking force they want and the tyre's grip," says Yamauchi

ASTRO'S PLAYROOM

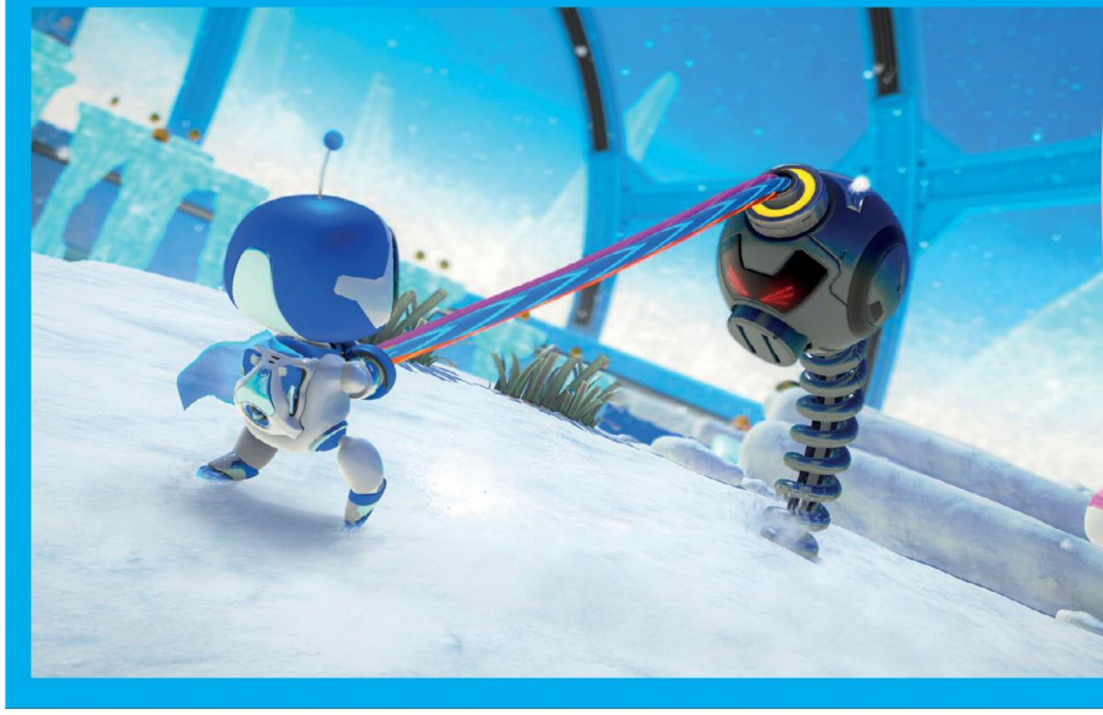
While Gran Turismo was the poster child for PS1 and PS2, embodying what was great about those console generations, SIE Japan Studio's PS VR breakout mascot, Astro, could steal headlines at PS5's launch. Yes, he's cute, and yes, Astro's Playroom will come pre-installed on all PS5s, but it's the little fella's adoption of all the DualSense's features that will make him a star.

"Astro's steps can be felt running on plastic, metal, sand, and even splashing in water," says Nicolas Doucet, the studio director. Astro's Playroom is very much the showcase game. The focus is on utilising the haptic feedback, and representing the feel of the worlds Astro has to travel through the controller, whether that's running over icy environments or struggling to walk through wind.

"The concept of 'feeling the world' is omnipresent, that's a significant step forward in immersion," says Doucet. "I tried turning haptic feedback off once, and could not believe how much I missed it. It is a game changer for sure!"

While there's always a jump in graphical fidelity with a new console generation, with PS5 Sony is attempting to revitalise the way we connect to games on a tactile level. The DualSense is one tool in PS5's box of tricks, and it looks like it could inspire developers to experiment and innovate.

Of course we've been here before. The Sixaxis was the revolution for the PS3 era that was soon dropped by many developers. But the depth and breadth of ways game developers are adopting the tech to enhance their titles suggests the DualSense could alter how we play for good. We feel this one's going to be big.



"IT COULD INSPIRE DEVELOPERS TO EXPERIMENT AND INNOVATE."

You should see us in a crown

Mediatonic talks to Jess Kinghorn about the success and future of **Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout**

On the off-chance you're unfamiliar with the feel-good smash hit of the summer, Fall Guys' lead game designer Joe Walsh will get you up to speed: "The initial [pitch for the] design of the game was 'Takeshi's Castle is amazing and I want to know what it feels like to be an overweight, middle-aged Japanese businessman at the start of a muddy obstacle course that's probably gonna ruin my life.'" Truly, Mediatonic has realised this very specific vision. (If you're still a bit perplexed, read on, and make sure you check out our online review starting on p84.)

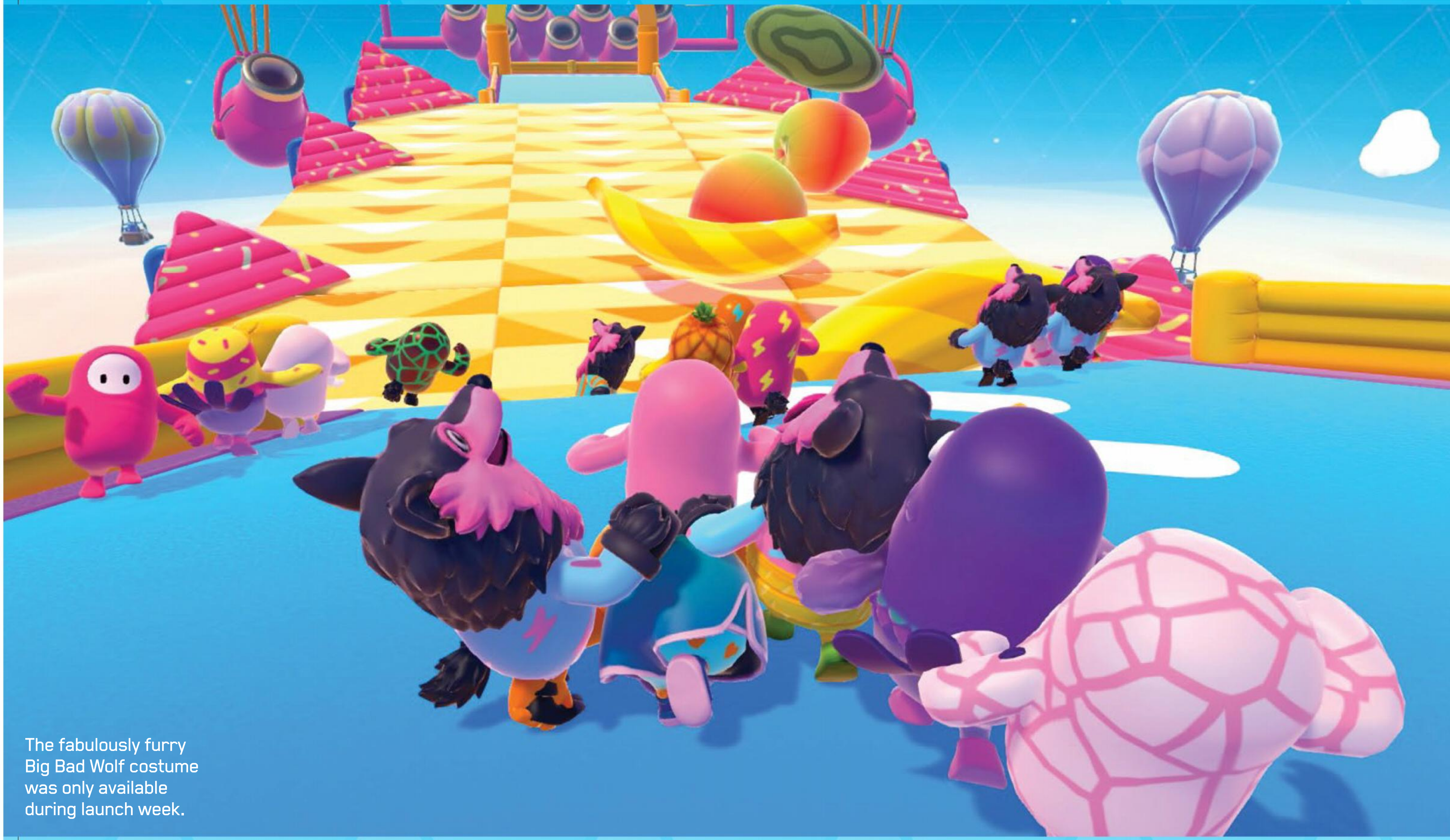
Debuting as part of August's PS Plus lineup, the round-based multiplayer title quickly enjoyed meteoric success. We ask the developers about the challenges of developing a live game that quickly gains a huge audience.

"I think a big thing is steeling yourself for the feedback that you're gonna get," Walsh tells us, "because as the audience grows you are going to get people who love the game, and you're going to get people who don't like the game and you're going to get people who have very, very strong opinions on the internet about every single thing that you do."

But the team at Mediatonic aren't letting that deter them as they plan the game's future.

"The fun thing about Takeshi's Castle is you never know what's coming next," Walsh begins, "and we want to make sure that that feeling continues to be the case with Fall

FALL GUYS

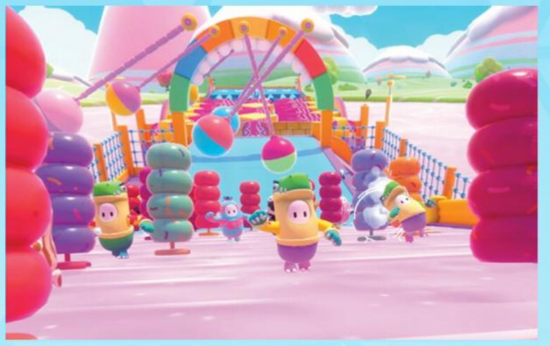


The fabulously furry Big Bad Wolf costume was only available during launch week.

» Guys. [...] That's a big focus for the team right now: [...] making sure that we have this constant flow of new rounds into the game."

Mediatonic revealed season two's Medieval theme during Opening Night Live at this year's Gamescom. New costumes allow you to dress up as a knight, dragon, mage, or your own fantastical, pseudo-middle-ages combination. Your adventurous beans must drop drawbridges, buffet siege ramps, and avoid swinging axes in rounds styled as epic knightly quests. But, when it comes to the future of Fall Guys, the age of chivalry is far from where the story ends.

"NEW COSTUMES ALLOW YOU TO DRESS UP AS A KNIGHT, DRAGON, OR MAGE."



Our top tip for Hit Parade: you can see where the wrecking balls are by their shadows.

UNITED WE FALL

Walsh tells us the team are listening to the community. "People are really excited about having new ways to play. So we hear a lot of people just want to race gauntlets all day, those are their favourite rounds. We hear people want to play a squads mode where you win or lose as teams [....] We hear that a lot of people would really love crossplay between PlayStation and PC. And, you know, we haven't got concrete plans in place yet. A lot of things are in flux, but those are the types of things that we're looking at when we're looking at the big things that we can add to Fall Guys to keep things interesting."

However, the team will maintain a focused approach to developing updates. Walsh explains, "For every single round in Fall Guys, [you will find] an army of people who think it's the best round [...] and an army of people who think it's the worst [...] and it's a big learning process as a team to not immediately jump on feedback that you see and also to make sure that you gain a measured, balanced view of the situation before you make any drastic changes."

Agents of chaos, assemble

Proof that OPM readers can be very naughty beans

Lead designer Joe Walsh admits "I do the odd finish-line grab myself," and tells us player shenanigans are here to stay. On social media we asked what's the worst thing you've done in a match. And you said...

"One guy tried to grab me early in a match on the moving walls level so I just grabbed him back and doomed us both."
Zachary Knight

"I drop to the bottom of Hex-A-Gone and remove as much as possible while watching everyone else fall through the gaps I've made."
@ChazzH69

"Someone grabbed me in the first round, so I kept trying to sabotage him/her every round. [...] Team Tail Tag they were on my team, See-Saw made them miss out on the top 20%, Jump Club kept grabbing them but they survived every time. When Hex-A-Gone came I just followed, grabbed and made us both hit the slime first!"
Richard Dunbar

"When I'm losing in Fall Ball and I know I'm not going to win due to being put on an uneven team, I start scoring goals in my own goal."
@DeejBruce

"I AM LOVING THIS GAME. But the worst thing I do is not co-ordinating my outfit. Cactus top with a pigeon bottom? MONSTER."
Harry Allen

We love the dragon costumes, coming as part of the medieval update in October.

Drawbridges and other fortifications are coming as part of Season Two's middle-ages spread.

He also quips, "Contrary to popular belief, we will not be removing yellow team [reputedly the worst] from the game just because people made a bunch of memes about it."

FALLING IN STYLE

The community is incredibly creative and enthusiastic, as lead artist Rob Jackson tells us. "We weren't quite ready for the huge amounts of appreciative artists being super, super-positive," he begins, awkwardly adding, "But then the direction that some people take it in is… *interesting*. Like, it's just interesting to see that we've penetrated the internet in an exciting fashion."

Odd choice of words aside, no, we didn't probe further about filthy Fall Guys fan art. Walsh changes the subject, saying he's seen impressive cakes, animations, and even crochet. Cake's much more enjoyable, we reckon. Jackson says he tries to look at as much fan art as possible and that all the art team are always sharing their favourites.

He tells us about his favourites. "I particularly gravitate towards pixel art and I love it when people demake it. […] To me that's a real sign that we succeeded because it's instantly recognisable – it shows that we did well in our art direction. So that kind of stuff is just really gratifying."

He then reveals what inspired the game's visual direction, the characters in particular: "The physicality of [a Fall Guy] – like, the shape of them – is designed specifically for the way we wanted the game to play. […] You're top-heavy, your arms are too big, they kind of make you all a bit clumsy. Your legs are too short, so when you try and jump over things you might catch your feet."

He later adds, "And then we wanted to keep their bodies as simple as possible. So they have this pill kind of shape, which makes them very easy to slap colours and materials on – it makes it very easy to customise them any way we want to. I think it's interesting that people picked up on the jelly bean aspect of it because early on [I spent a lot of time] looking at Instagram – like, food, and ice creams, and things like that. And I was very much inspired by the colours of sweets […] and so all of that kind of led into the aesthetic of these guys, especially in the colour palettes that we chose. That's how they formed."

"WE HAD SOME INTERESTING TEAM EXCURSIONS TO SOME [BOUNCY] CASTLES."

So it turns out people wondering aloud online what a Fall Guy tastes like is by design. As for the environments, Jackson offers this nugget: "We had some interesting team excursions to some [bouncy] castles to get a good feel for them."

FACING LEGENDS

Walsh tells us, "One of the great things about the Fall Guy is how customisable they are and how well they lend themselves to mashups."

We asked the pair if they'd seen the fan-made Hitman mockups going around the internet. Walsh concedes, "I think their egg-like head lends itself quite well to [Agent 47]."

Walsh later adds, "You can really throw any character at a Fall Guy and you'll have something funny and ridiculous." Beyond the Valve character skins coming to PlayStation, Mediatonic is tight-lipped about future official skins. However, Walsh tells us that there are entities "suddenly very, very interested in having their characters in the game," and he concludes, "watch this space for more amazing things." ■

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PS5 | PS4 Pro | PS4 | PlayStation.VR
PlayStation
Official Magazine - UK
ISSUE 180 NOVEMBER 2020
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ONLY ON PS5
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Leads our HOT 5 FOR PLAYSTATION 5 next-gen previews!
WE'RE #1 FOR PS5
Sony's studios reveal how PS5 will change the way we play
DEV ACCESS
BATMAN IS DEAD!
Can Gotham Knights survive without the Bat?
LONG LIVE…
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TAP FOR TEXT FREE COVER
FUTURE
Treyarch & Raven turn up the red heat with their next-gen shooter

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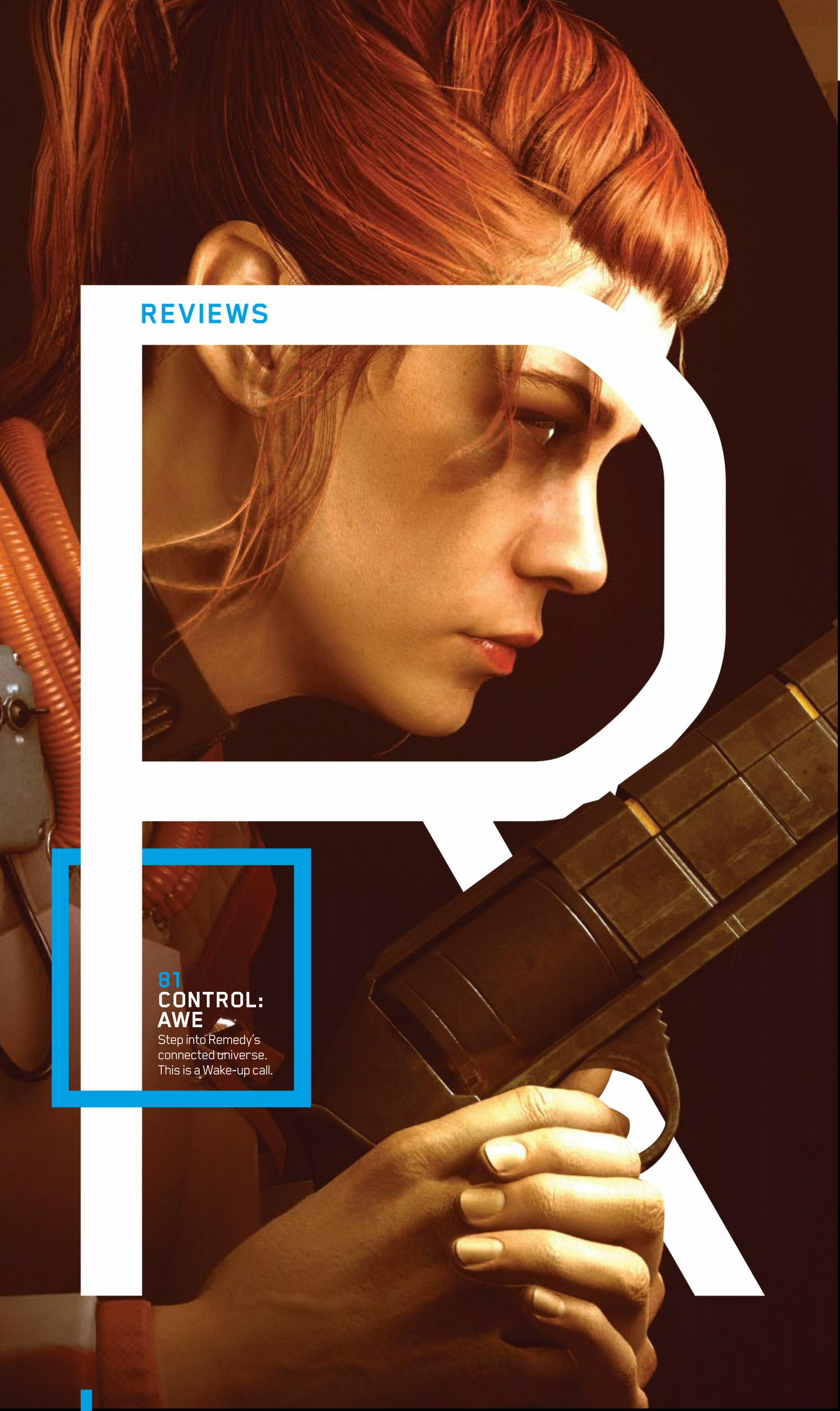

REVIEWS

81
CONTROL: AWE
Step into Remedy's connected universe. This is a Wake-up call.

OPM SCORES

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

GOLD AWARD
Awarded to a game that's brilliantly executed on every level, combining significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics and lasting appeal.

EDITOR'S AWARD
PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

EDITOR'S AWARD
Not at the very highest echelon, but this is a game that deserves recognition and special praise based on its ambition, innovation or other notable achievement.

10 INCREDIBLE
The kind of phenomenal experience rarely seen in a console generation.

9 OUTSTANDING
Unreservedly brilliant – this should be in every collection.

8 VERY GOOD
A truly excellent game, marred by just a few minor issues.

7 GOOD
A great concept unfulfilled or the familiar done well, but still well worth playing.

6 DECENT
Fun in parts, flawed in others, but more right than wrong.

5 AVERAGE
What you expect and little more, this is for devotees only.

4 BELOW AVERAGE
Any bright ideas are drowning in a sea of bugs or mediocrity.

3 POOR
A seriously flawed game with little merit on any level.

2 AWFUL
Disgraceful: the disc would be more beneficial as a coaster.

1 HORRIFIC
Own this and you'll be swiftly, justifiably, exiled from society.

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HYPNOSPACE OUTLAW 76 | MORTAL SHELL 77 | PROJECT CARS 3 78 | PISTOL WHIP 80

Ms. Marvel is the central figure in the campaign mode, and her love for the other Avengers is a delight.

> "KAMALA'S QUEST TO REUNITE THE AVENGERS IS NEVER WITHOUT HEART AND CHARM."

THOR BLIMEY

@MrOscarTK

MARVEL'S AVENGERS

Marvellously assembling a platform for future heroics

8

PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

INFO

FORMAT PS4, PS5
ETA OUT NOW (PS4), TBC (PS5)
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

While Marvel's Avengers is designed to be an ongoing multiplayer experience, its campaign mode is fully fleshed out (taking 11 hours or so), and thanks to revolving around Kamala Khan discovering her own superpowers and reuniting the Avengers ensures the game steps out of the shadow of the MCU more easily than you'd expect.

Opening with Kamala and her dad exploring the A-Day celebrations honouring the Avengers, it immediately set the supers apart from their cinematic counterparts, and when everything goes wrong and the team are blamed for San Francisco's destruction in the Inhuman-creating blast that give Kamala her polymorphic abilities, it carries more weight because we're in her shoes.

MISSING MARVELS

It's a darker Avengers story, but Kamala's quest to reunite the Avengers is never without heart and charm. The campaign is a joy to play, filled with sensational set-pieces and twists and turns that, while expected, are nonetheless wonderfully executed. Brawling in the campaign can be repetitive, though, as you only touch the tip of your heroes' RPG-style skill tree and upgrade potential. Most enemies are AIM robots, foot soldiers in hazmat suits, or masked mercs, and supervillain boss fights are a little lacking. Multiplayer missions are thrown into the mix, but for the most part the campaign is a single-player brawler with unique stages to play through, whether that's flying through a valley dodging lasers or leaping across canyons in search of a resistance base.

Kamala might be the heart of Marvel's Avengers, but there are plenty of occasions when

»

Right Scientists supreme MODOK and Monica lead AIM and are the main villainous threat, though other villains appear too…

Left …For instance, who is this nefarious fake Thor? Iconic mission chains add story and centre on the rest of the Avengers.

» you play as her icons. You get to do a lot of Hulk smashing, but you also have your moments with Bruce, and see plenty of the man behind Iron Man's emotionless mask. Bruce and Tony have slightly larger roles as surrogate superhero dads for Kamala (her real dad, too, is a delight), but the other heroes are also great, and events culminate in a finale that leaves you wanting more.

PLAYING HERO

Thankfully, there *is* more. The campaign is just the tip of the iceberg, introducing you to how each hero plays, the way mission objectives work, and the vendors in your social hub where you can earn faction points and buy gear and skins (the only way to change appearance). Gear offers different buffs, but has no visible effect, meaning until you get to the endgame gear chasing isn't all that exciting. You can buy cosmetics with real money, but you don't *need* to shell out as heroes and storylines will all be added for free over time.

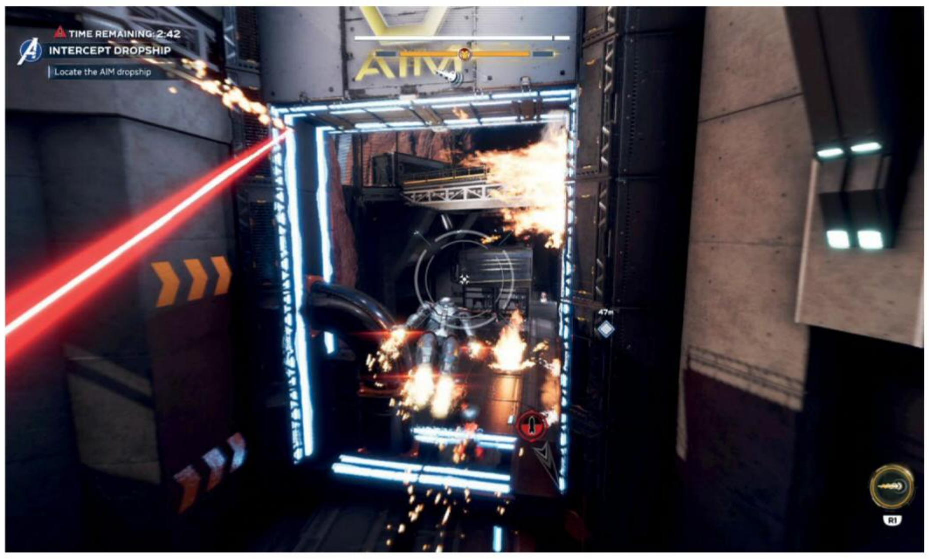
By the time you hit level 15 (out of 50) you realise how different the heroes really are despite all being built on the same fundamentals. The basic skill tree gives you access to simple things like new combo finishers, but both the speciality and mastery trees frequently allow you to pick one of three effects to specialise your play style (switchable at any time). For example, you can swap between buffs during Black Widow's team-wide cloaking shield, or give Thor's hammer the option to ricochet between enemies at the expense of pinning them. Combine that with gear and you can, for instance, add Pym shrinking effects to those moves.

ULTIMATE TEAM-UP

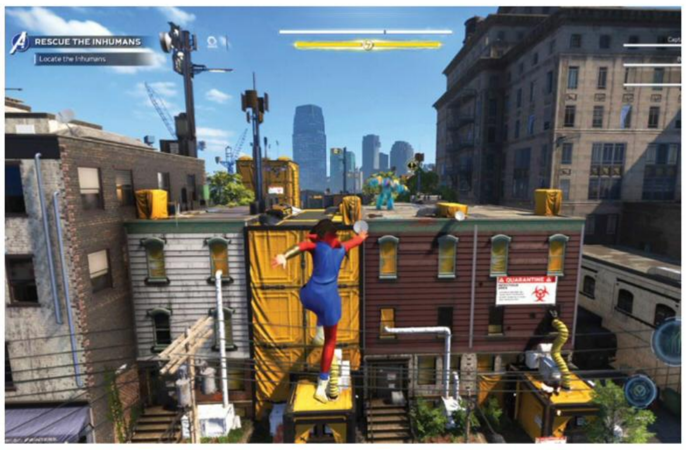
In the post-game online multiplayer, operations group missions and tasks together, ensuring the game flows from different mission types to taking on villain sectors and AIM hives. That said, even with settings ranging from the Utah Badlands to Norway, things can start to feel repetitive. The same structures and room layouts come up repeatedly. What we *do* love is the mission construction: some last just ten minutes or less, and even the bigger areas are mostly filled out with optional points of interest, so you can spend an hour investigating those, or blaze through the mission in less time by sticking to the critical path. Only in more complicated areas like hives do you need to make a firm time commitment. Marvel's Avengers is approachable whether you have lots of time or only a little, and whether you're playing with a full team of mates or alone – and that's something we *greatly* prefer to a game constantly demanding all our attention.

While combat appears to resemble Batman: Arkham or Marvel's Spider-Man's free-flow fighting, in the end it simply can't be the same,

"IT'S REALLY APPROACHABLE WHETHER YOU HAVE LOTS OF TIME OR ONLY A LITTLE."



Above The campaign's hero missions feel wonderfully single-player with great set-piece moments.



Right New York makes a colourful appearance. Ready for Miles to swing in?

Above Good team synergy can make even high-level missions a breeze.

because this is an online multiplayer game. Counters and parries at first seem to be key to combat (one of Cap's skill trees is entirely based on it), but in later stages enemies can spam unblockable attacks, meaning your only option is to dodge, which can feel limiting. An unblockable attack is indicated by a red pulse on an enemy, whereas counterable hits glow yellow or blue. It's a subtle hint that can be hard to read in the middle of the chaotic, particle-effect-drenched fights. Throw in variable timing, and enemies that can snipe at you using ranged attacks from off-screen, and a battle can sometimes feel like a staggerfest. You're warned about off-screen ranged attacks by a pop-up at the side of the screen, but there's no warning when enemies are simply in the distance, hovering far away and firing at you.

All heroes have ranged options to deal with distant enemies (or can turn into jetfighter-like damage machines in the case of Thor and Iron Man), but switching from melee combat to over-the-shoulder-aiming often disrupts the flow of a fight. This is less of a problem in the more enclosed areas, but it's something that could do with tweaking.

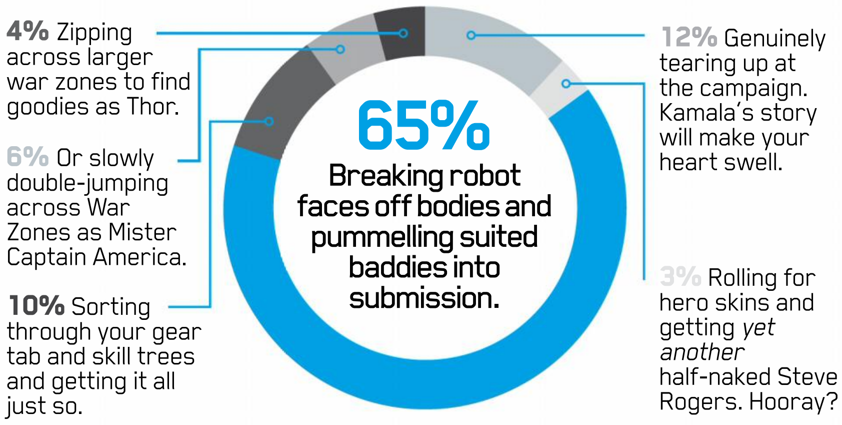
The game's something of a satisfaction rollercoaster, then, but currently it delights more often than not. Crystal Dynamics has already committed to making improvements, engaging with suggestions from the community online, which is promising to see and should ensure the game has longevity.

VERDICT

The Ms.-Marvel-centric campaign is almost worth the cover price alone. Deep hero customisation sets the stage for a strong online mode with plenty more to come. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN… MARVEL'S AVENGERS



4% Zipping across larger war zones to find goodies as Thor.

6% Or slowly double-jumping across War Zones as Mister Captain America.

10% Sorting through your gear tab and skill trees and getting it all just so.

65% Breaking robot faces off bodies and pummelling suited baddies into submission.

12% Genuinely tearing up at the campaign. Kamala's story will make your heart swell.

3% Rolling for hero skins and getting *yet another* half-naked Steve Rogers. Hooray?

SECOND OPINION WIDOW WANTER

I'm tired of how the MCU has saturated the media landscape but Kamala Khan persuaded me to give it one more chance. The single-player campaign begins as *her* story and is all the better for it. What can I say? Fangirls have got to stick together. Ms. Marvel and Black Widow remain my online favourites, even if the combat isn't. I enjoy busting heads as much as the next person but I'm looking forward to seeing how the multiplayer powers up over time. **Jess Kinghorn**

LOVING/HATING

TEASE MASTERS

A lot of potential updates are teased, from references to Captain Marvel to Hank Pym's presence, and mentions of Thor's sneaky brother.

TIME TO REWATCH

Kamala's story has us buzzing. So why is there no easy way to replay it? Don't make Destiny 2's mistake – we just want to dive back in.

ALSO ON PLAYSTATION 5

As PS4 owners will get a free upgrade to the PS5 version, there's no reason to wait. Like on PS4 Pro, you'll be able to choose between an enhanced graphic mode or performance (60fps/4K on PS5), plus the SSD will speed up loading. Rumble is used effectively on PS4, so expect even finer haptics on DualSense.

IS IT BETTER THAN?

PS4
MARVEL
ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

YES

This might have more heroes but it gets repetitive quickly, and is less immersive than Marvel's Avengers.

PS4
Only On PlayStation
MARVEL
SPIDER-MAN
16
INSOMNIAC

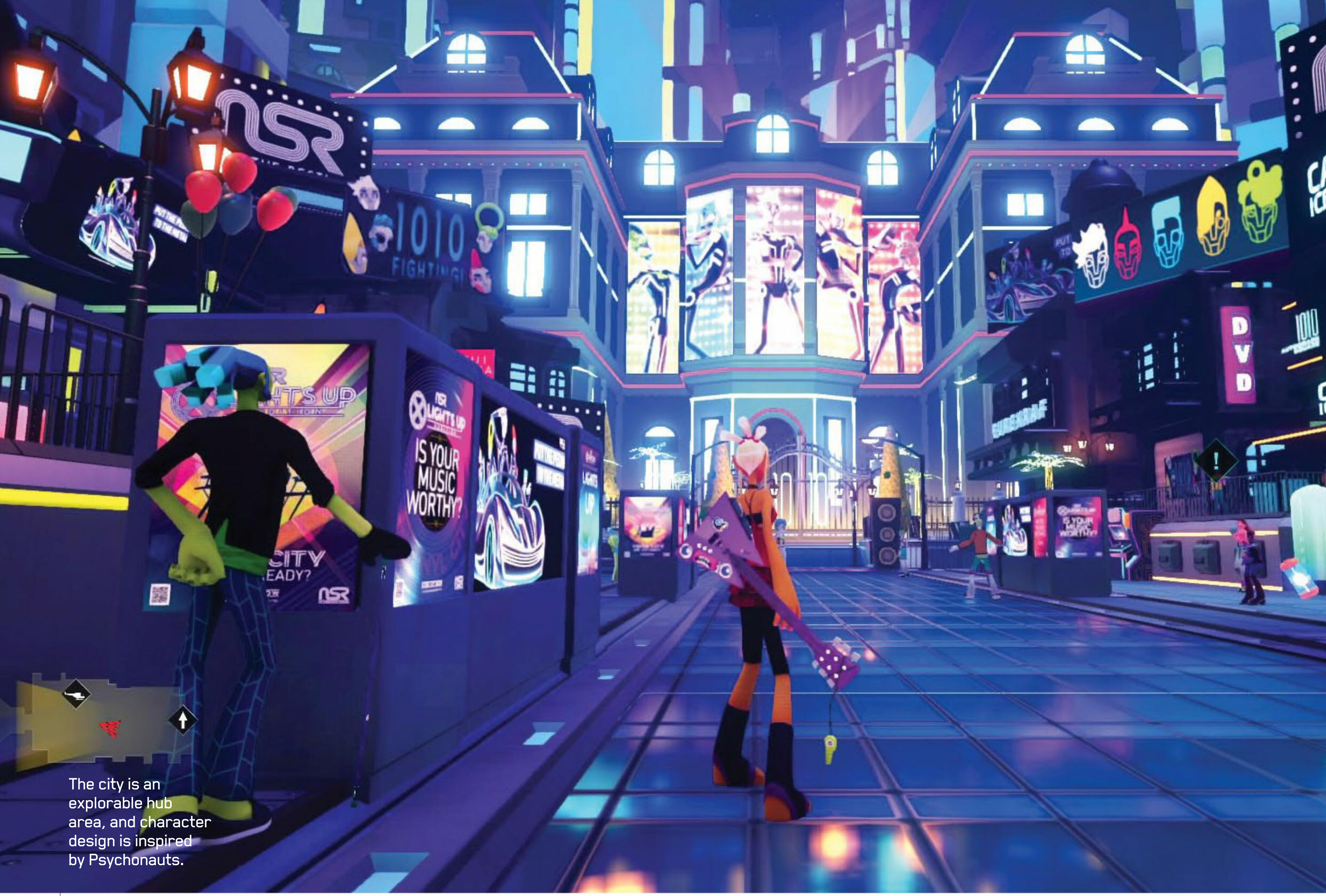
NO

Greater focus means this solo Spidey outing is tighter. It could even be the best superhero game ever made.

PS4
MARVEL
HEROES
OMEGA

YES

We still miss this online title, but it offered the ideas for the live service that Marvel's Avengers develops.



The city is an explorable hub area, and character design is inspired by Psychonauts.

8 PlayStation Official Magazine - UK

NO STRAIGHT ROADS

If music be the food of love, rock on!

We've all watched talent shows before, right? And we've seen earnest people trying their best to not get humiliated by the judges? Imagine that you'd been put in that situation yourself. How would you react to having your dreams crushed? You *probably* wouldn't decide to disassemble the structure of local governance. That's what our heroes Zuke and Mayday do, though – with *rawk*!

It's more than a talent show, though. It's a setup to find new artists to provide power to Vinyl City, which runs on music (like kids' screams in Monsters Inc, only less creepy). The duo quickly discover that actually, they were producing incredible power, and their rejection was due to the determination of NSR – the rulers of the city – to promote and protect electronic dance music (EDM). Let the battle of the bands (or, at least, the genres) begin!

Let's get straight to the soundtrack, which is fantastic. There's a hint of J-pop to the upbeat music that accompanies your exploration of the city, and the tracks you make your way through levels to are great. The true masterpieces are the boss battle songs, each crafted to perfectly suit the character that you're fighting. Whether you're having a rap battle with an estranged brother, fighting a child piano prodigy and her mother, or trying to take down a digital idol, there's a thumping choon to do it to.

INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB SOLD OUT
DEV METRONOMIK

OH MY CHORD

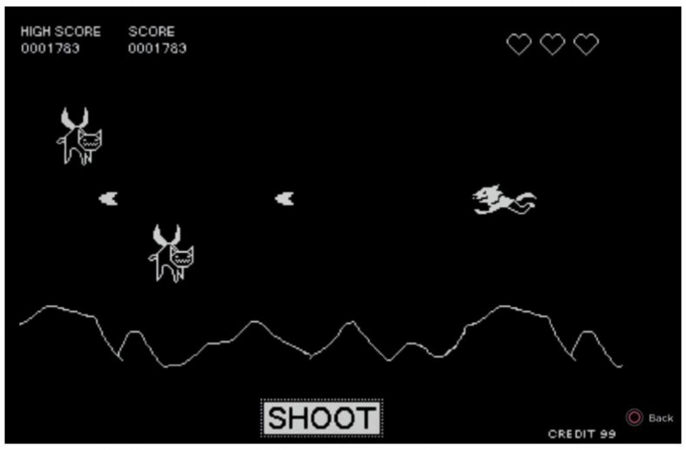
Although there are special abilities and moves to unlock, and you occasionally get ammo for a distance weapon, combat mostly consists of standard melee attacks. This means whacking things with your guitar (Mayday) or drumsticks (Zuke), something that works perfectly well, but remains unremarkable throughout. That doesn't really matter, though, as everything surrounding this is so wonderful.

No Straight Roads isn't an interactive album like Sayonara Wild Hearts – the city acts as an explorable hub, and the boss approaches feature traditional platforming sections, and gates unlocked by defeating nearby enemies – but the music still feeds directly into gameplay. Enemies attack with the beat (which isn't always obvious outside boss fights), and you need to time parries with the music perfectly. Parries are optional, and only apply to a small number of attacks, but pulling them off is satisfying.

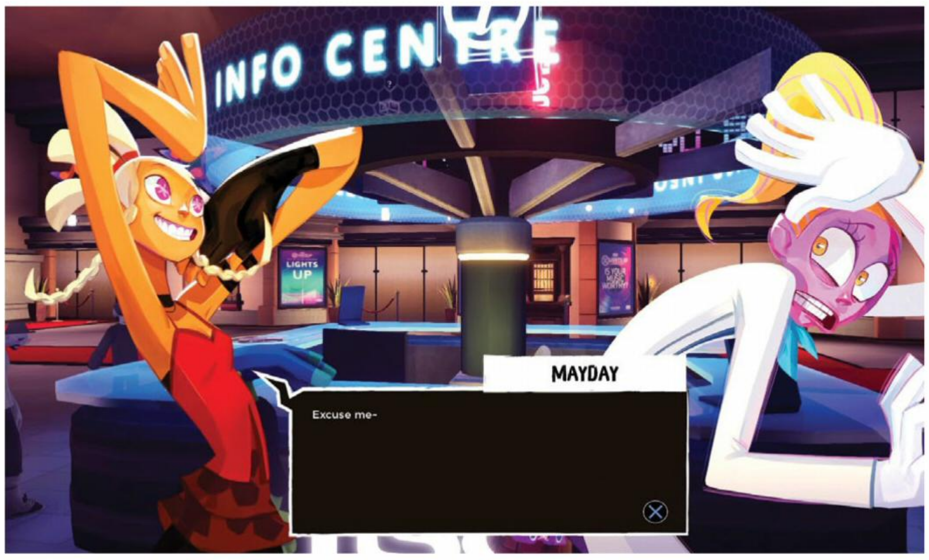
In an industry dominated by Japanese, American, and British companies, it's great to see a game powered by Malaysian talent. This lends elements such as the art, music, and voice acting a freshness we didn't know we were missing until we were given it. There's also the simple fact that

> "THE ART, THE MUSIC, THE SCRIPT, AND THE ACTING ARE FULL OF JOY AND ENERGY."

Right Your sewer hideout has a cool little rhythm shooter game called Master Wolfe.



Below This is a looker – the character design always impresses.



MAYDAY

Excuse me-

Above left Boss battles are filled with incredible creativity, but demand skill.

Metronomik is composed of incredibly talented human beings. Despite the dryness of the fundamentals, the action never has a chance to grow stale, with new ideas thrown in almost constantly, and without warning.

BEAT ROOT

One of many things to celebrate about this game is that it allows for two-player couch co-op. Yay! It doesn't always do a great job of keeping you both on-screen if you don't stay close together, but it's welcome nonetheless. Play solo, and you switch between characters at will (subject to a brief cooldown), which works brilliantly. Solo play doesn't even interfere with the sections specifically designed to exploit the fact that there are two characters, an achievement worthy of praise on its own.

The game doesn't take itself too seriously, unsurprising when the basic premise is 'rock fights EDM for control of a place called Vinyl City'. The art, the music, the script, and the acting (especially Mayday) are full of joy and energy. It's a game happy to joke around and, while mostly failing to mock rock and electronica tropes seems like a missed opportunity, the boss battle against robot boy band 1010 is a delicious slice of satire.

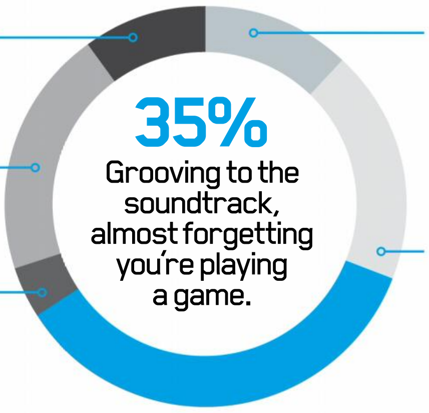
The party's over sooner than we'd like at four to five hours, but there's enough to keep you around backstage for a while: new difficulties and modes for the boss fights, upgrades to chase, and an *incredibly* difficult challenge from an optional foe. Party on, dudes.

VERDICT

A colourful sonic wave of imagination and joy with possibly the best soundtrack of any videogame this year, No Straight Roads is sure to pluck your strings in the best possible way. **Luke Kemp**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN… NO STRAIGHT ROADS



10% Tapping ⊡ to attack, wishing there was a *little* more to it.

20% Being treated to a surprise, and breaking into a goofy smile.

4% Not caring that you can see where the story is going next.

35% Grooving to the soundtrack, almost forgetting you're playing a game.

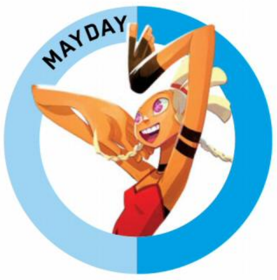
12% Being grateful for the super-generous, flow-saving checkpoint system.

19% Going back to enjoy a boss fight with new music or modes.

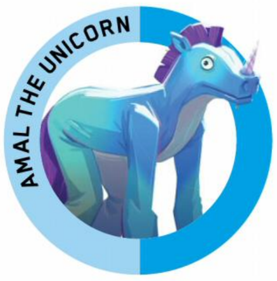
SECOND OPINION SERIES EXPERT

When someone is too emotional to speak in a musical, they sing. Here, you rock out. While the dance of avoiding attacks matched to the beat isn't much more complicated than a one-two-step, the visual direction and the soundtrack are a double act that proves to be the perfect headliner. You owe it to yourself to give this one a spin. **Jess Kinghorn**

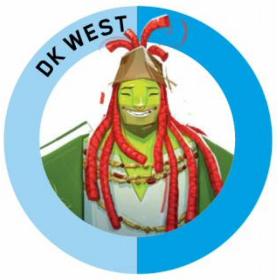
FRIENDS & ENEMIES



One half of band Bunk Bed Junction. Friendly and ready to rock.



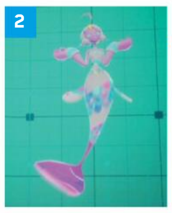
Looks like a person in a cheap unicorn suit. The best/worst NPC.



Zuke's brother, called by NPR to challenge BBJ to rap battles.

THE FIRST FIVE HOURS…

1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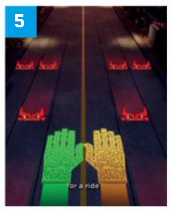
5

1 How dare those judges fail to recognise our musical talent! Time to take our anger out on the city, like true heroes. **2** So we're fighting… a squeaky-voiced electronic idol? Sure, why not, so long as we can hit her. **3** Now we're fighting a nine-year-old kid?? Oh well, anything for rock! **4** Our skill tree is starting to look tasty. **5** With the story beaten, we have another go at the second, optional DK West rap battle.

TROPHY CABINET

OOOOH, SHINY!

BRONZE
You can find stickers offering temporary attack boosts in the city hub. Collect your first, and this is yours.

SCHOOL OF HARD ROCKS

SILVER
Finish all boss fights on Hard. To unlock it, finish the story, then speak to somebody outside each venue.

ROCK RIGHT NOW!

GOLD
Unlock all skills for this. You'll need a *lot* of fans (basically XP), so this is one to work on earning in the postgame.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB EA SPORTS **DEV** EA VANCOUVER

UFC 4

In for a pound

You've got the skills to pay the bills," coach Davies bellows seconds before we enter the Octagon. At first, we're not sure, but after getting a few clean jabs in and then pulling off the ground takedown he's just taught us, who are we to disagree?

UFC 4's career mode is full of such hammy moments. Melodrama aside, it's a better way to learn the basics of MMA than UFC 3's sterile training mode. Slight enhancements have also been made to the mechanics, ensuring that the two-and-a-half-year wait between entries has mostly been worth it.

First off, the good. That pesky Ultimate Team has been done away with, resulting in uncomplicated 1v1 online bouts where luck is never involved, and a more streamlined progression system that reflects your success in other modes.[1] Career, as mentioned, has also been improved, primed to smoothly introduce anyone new to performing submissions, blocking the head and body, and managing a stamina gauge.

Fighting from a standing position remains largely unchanged, though a new feature dubbed 'Real Player Motion Tech' does a lot to help UFC 4's realism when clinching, as do added takedown animations. Less realistic are the revised ground minigames,[2] like the one where you must rotate your right stick and avoid your opponent's cursor during a choke, but it relays the necessary tension.

Long-time players will be disappointed at Joe Rogan's absence from the commentary booth this time around, even if Daniel Cormier and John Anik's excitable tones are perfectly serviceable. And that's a phrase which perfectly sums up UFC 4 in general. It won't surprise MMA fans, but it should delight. **Aaron Potter**

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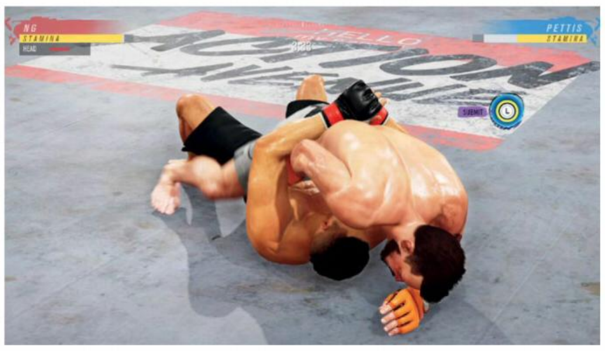


FOOTNOTES [1] You use evolution points, earned during matches and training, to upgrade your custom character. [2] These are triggered when you or your opponent are taken to the ground.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB DEEP SILVER **DEV** FIVE LIVES STUDIOS

WINDBOUND

Smooth sailing ahead

True to classic indie game style, as Windbound's protagonist Kara you wash up on an island with little instruction as to what you need to do. However, it soon becomes apparent that you need to seek out the beacon-like structures scattered across a handful of small isles in order to open up a pathway to the next area.

Of course, to travel between those isles you'll need a boat, and that means staying alive long enough to craft one. Windbound is a survival game. You need to monitor Kara's hunger meter, as well as her health bar, at all times. Since resources are scarce, each island can only sustain you for so long.[1]

The crafting tab is where you assemble weapons, boats, and campfires to cook meals. (Eat raw meat and you risk becoming sick and lose health.) As you proceed through the story and visit more Forbidden Islands, discovering new raw materials in the process, your crafting skills will broaden. In Windbound, exploration is rewarded.

Though colourful and charming, there is still a tough grind behind those visuals.[2] Most of the action takes place on the water but during the early game moving between islands can be tedious. You're limited to one speed and, aside from the islands in the distance, there's little to look at as you travel. Once you reach an island you may have to face off against aggressive wildlife in an enjoyable, if simplistic, combat system.

Where the game really excels is in its beautiful, colourful graphics and the relaxing atmosphere they help to create. There is also a deep lore to discover as you travel across the archipelago, culminating in a seafaring experience that's sure to make waves. **Rebecca Stow**

8 PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

FOOTNOTES [1] Essentially, you'll discover a new land teeming with beautiful wildlife, then eat it all before moving on. [2] If you're hoping to speed from island to island, you'll have to learn patience.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB 2K GAMES **DEV** HB STUDIOS

PGA TOUR 2K21

Stroke of genius

The game formerly known as The Golf Club is the most fun you never knew you could have in a badged sports blazer.[1] But while the new layer of licensed content grabs the limelight, it's the refined gameplay that shines.

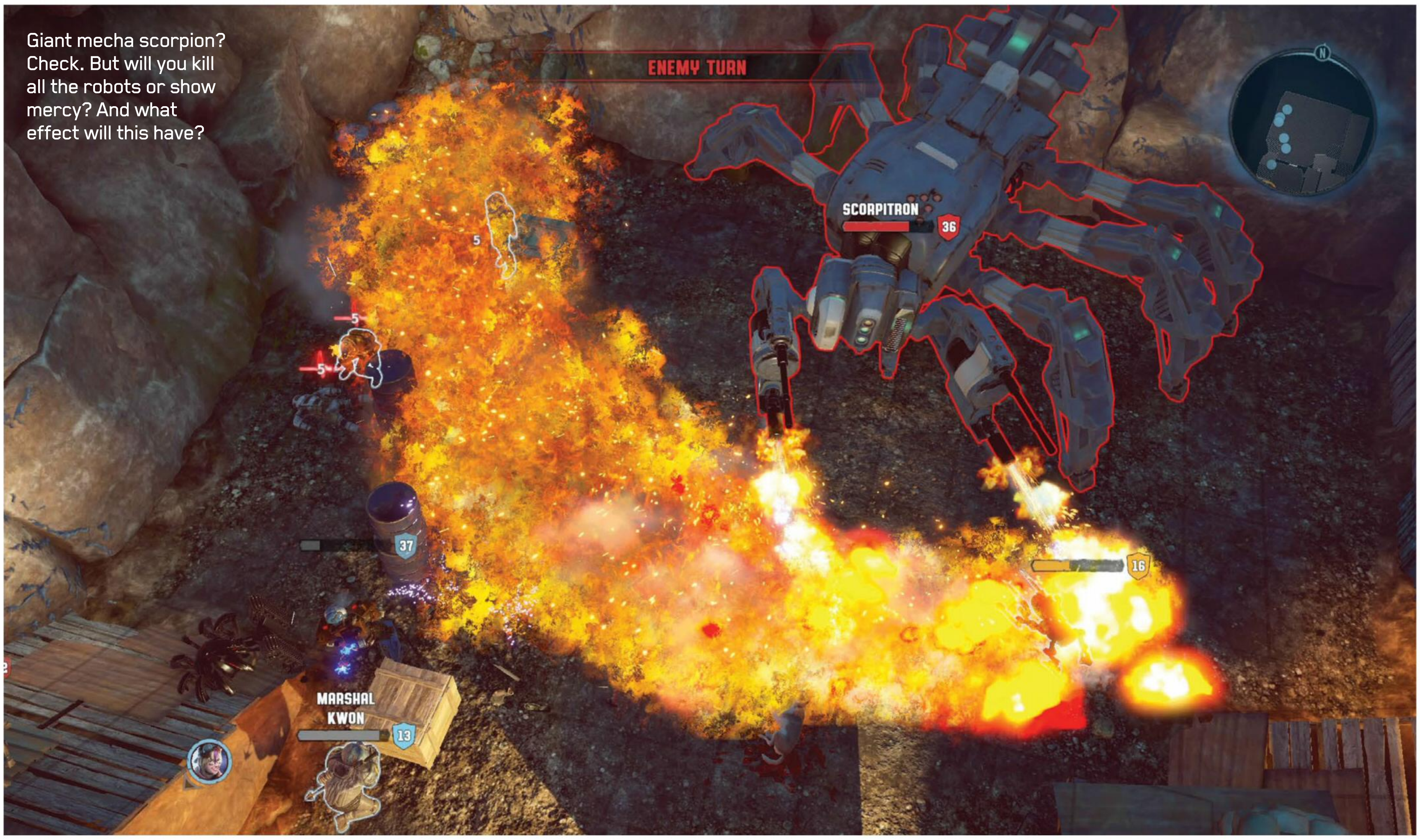
The core of what worked in The Golf Club returns, but the grind of the game is improved. Putting, in particular, is now a joy, with shot power easier to manage, ensuring those replay-grabbing 50-foot putts are achievable. PGA Tour 2K21 does an excellent job of turning us armchair Scottie Schefflers into on-par performers. You can select clubs and stances using the D-pad, and holding L1 enables you to adjust the ball's spin, loft, fade, and draw. Those and the timing meter mean you will be dropping the ball onto the green like a champ in no time. It's easy to grasp but hard to master, as tougher courses, windy conditions, and merciless AI rivals make mastering your nerves as well as the controls is necessary to win.

A robust career mode sees you compete across 30 events, including 15 real-world courses. A new rivalry system has you going head-to-head with a licensed pro,[2] and there are plenty of difficulty adjustments to ensure repeated plays remain competitive. This year also offers MyPlayer inclusion, so you can use your created player across all modes.

The only downside to this year's game, as with The Golf Club, are the visuals. Even knocking balls about a clifftop woodland can feel sterile. But then the game offers an easy-to-use course creator and all is forgiven. Placing accessibility on par with accuracy, this is a golf sim so realistic you can smell the freshly laundered acid-blue chinos. **Ian Dean**

8 PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

FOOTNOTES [1] Kiss our face! [2] You can literally win the shirt off Sergio García's back by meeting various in-tournament objectives. More clubs and clothing can be bought in the in-game store.



Giant mecha scorpion? Check. But will you kill all the robots or show mercy? And what effect will this have?

FALLOUT BOY

WASTELAND 3

Heading back to the future

@IanDean4

8

PlayStation Official Magazine - UK

PS4
WASTELAND 3
18

INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB DEEPSILVER
DEV INXILE ENTERTAINMENT

Cabbages are being grown from Cabbage Patch Kids, a criminal mastermind's broad Scottish accent has been learned from watching a decayed copy of Braveheart, and our pet parrot has the personality of an off-camera Ellen DeGeneres. When we meet the God-President Reagan we're in no doubt: InXile's return is a trip into some of the best writing on PS4.

The upshot from this oddball behaviour? One of the finest RPGs of the year, which easily matches Bethesda's post-apocalyptic series. The dev has even included a bumper crop of bugs to make any Fallout fan feel right at home. Sticky menus, occasional drops in framerate, and even hard crashes abound. Yet it doesn't matter.

You shouldn't let the technical hitches and throwback visuals put you off; Wasteland 3's deep and devious ideas always wrestle away any doubts and mask any glitches. Reset your brain and you'll find yourself exploring, looting, crafting, skill-checking, and punning your way across the best sci-fi roleplayer since Fallout 3. As we unlock a patriotic laser cannon that sings 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and take on a Santa enslaving elves to make narcotics, all flaws are forgiven.

BIG RONNIE

Such craziness hangs off a story that sees the remnants of the Arizona Rangers called on by The Patriarch, the self-proclaimed owner of Colorado, to get his wayward children under control in exchange for food supplies.

We're in a snowy post-apocalyptic world. The bombs dropped decades earlier and time froze in a 1980s vision of the future. It's a world that never fails to surprise, and like the best RPGs it grows around you with every decision made. Nothing is ever simple as new sub-plots weave into that main quest to wrangle The Patriarch's children and everyone is a dialogue choice or action away from being a vital ally or enemy.

You're free to explore every environment, and upgraded skills and perks affect where you go, what happens when you get there, and how you can alter situations. Raise your Hard Ass game, for example, and you can intimidate enemies into doing your bidding.

This can even affect the turn-based, tactical combat. Character upgrades determine whether weapon bonuses can be maximised, and if robots can be hacked and turned against their masters. Every system and upgrade feeds into another, and with a balanced squad carefully arranged, Wasteland 3 makes choice, at every level, consistently rewarding. This stretches from your squad to your customisable truck and the Rangers' HQ, which is populated by the quirky characters met on your travels.

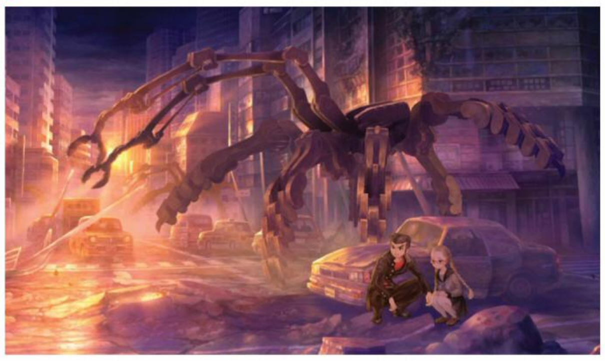
It's been done before, but rarely bettered, and while the game is plagued by bugs, they're outweighed by the depth of choice on offer.

VERDICT

A game even irritating glitches can't keep you from loving, Wasteland 3 is unique, inventive, and always fun. Make the right choice and put this one on your must-play list. **Ian Dean**

"THE BOMBS DROPPED AND TIME FROZE IN A 1980S VISION OF THE FUTURE."

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB SEGA, ATLUS **DEV** VANILLAWARE



13 SENTINELS: AEGIS RIM

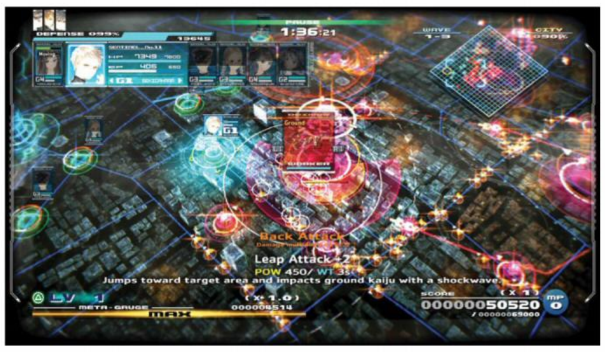
Dooms-dazed and confused

Having 13 protagonists is a tricky balancing act in itself. But when you're dealing with characters with multiple identities, dreams that might in fact be memories, and time travel – which sometimes means a flashback is of events in the future – you can be forgiven if your brain hurts when keeping up with 13 Sentinels.

You play as a group of Japanese high schoolers who pilot mech Sentinels to fight an invasion of kaiju known as Deimos. This is essentially the game's apocalyptic climax as you're pitted against waves of them in semi-realtime battles. But Vanillaware is more interested in how everyone's fates are connected leading up to the big fight. Most of your time, then, is spent in the adventure-like Remembrance mode as character paths overlap and branch through the game's Thought Cloud system (like an inventory for conversations where you have keywords instead of items). While not everyone gets the same amount of screen time,[1] and a character's story is often locked until you've met some arbitrary conditions, there's never a dull moment as you navigate a chronological whirlwind with androids, UFOs, men in black, pop idols, and the kitchen sink.

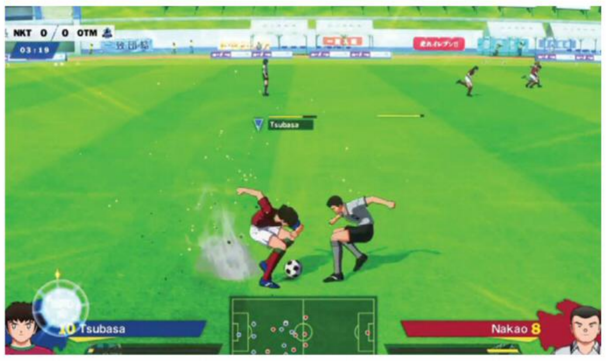
Kaiju battles are fun, especially if you like huge damage numbers or big area-of-effect explosions catching hundreds of enemies, but be aware that 13 Sentinels is a drastic departure from the action-heavy antics of Odin Sphere and Dragon's Crown, though Vanillaware's signature hand-drawn art style remains intact.[2] Safe in that knowledge, strap in for the wildest narrative ride since Nier Automata as you get lost in its messy conspiracy. **Alan Wen**

8 PlayStation. Official Magazine – UK


Leap Attack
Jumps toward target area and impacts ground kaiju with a shockwave

FOOTNOTES [1] Highlights include UFO-obsessed Natsuno and her friend Yuki, who likes beating up bullies. [2] As is the studio's obsession with food – one character's story revolves around snacks.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB BANDAI NAMCO **DEV** TAMSOFT



CAPTAIN TSUBASA: RISE OF NEW CHAMPIONS

Many boys, one cup

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of sports anime bedrock Captain Tsubasa in 2018, the series returns to mainline consoles to deliver what can only be called anime sports – a football game that while following the regular rules also allows you and your opponents to dash into each other, perform goal-ripping special shots, and engage in midair-battles for the ball.

While it can be viewed as a football game for people who don't like football games, Captain Tsubasa is still essentially a football game, albeit one stuffed with fan content.[1] While most of your time is spent dribbling, sprinting, and passing, certain plays reward you with scenes from the series. The visual effects for attacks such as Tsubasa's Tiger Shot are great, and the sound design is impressive, but the novelty wears off quite quickly. You can either follow Tsubasa from a high school tournament to the nationals, or play a campaign with your own custom-designed protagonist. Local and online multiplayer are also included.

While it's a joy to take on familiar teams, the game's reliance on familiarity with the series makes the story mode unnecessarily difficult – either you execute a famous play, or chances are you won't score at all. This effectively bars players unfamiliar with the Captain Tsubasa saga from enjoying Rise Of New Champions. This is a game that gets exciting only when it leaves rudimentary football controls behind, which is less often than you'd think. If you're not a fan already,[2] this amounts to another game where players only distinguishable by haircut run after a ball. **Malindy Hetfeld**

6 PlayStation. Official Magazine – UK

Have some dessert!

FOOTNOTES [1] It may look like an arcade kickabout reminiscent of classic 16-bit footie, but it's really anime nonsense. [2] Did we mention it was anime silliness disguised as a football game?

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW **PUB** THUNDER LOTUS GAMES **DEV** THUNDER LOTUS GAMES

Request Advanced!
Three Sisters

SPIRITFARER

The journey, not the destination

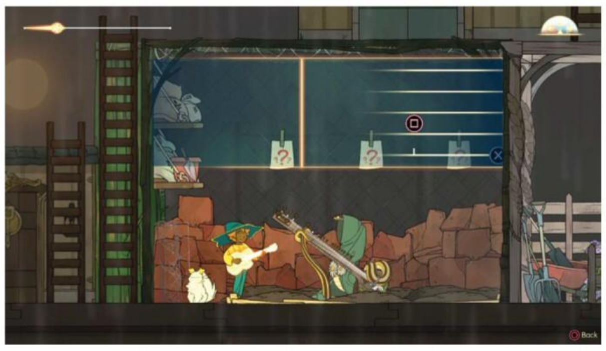
Stella and her cat Daffodil have big shoes to fill. As freshly minted spiritfarers they're picking up old Charon's duties and ensuring safe passage for the wispy denizens of a whimsical, water-logged world. You set sail in search of resources and new friends in this cosy, side-scrolling management game.

From the contemplative piano chords that sound like they're straight out of a Joe Hisaishi score to the expressive animation packed with personality and charm, its influences are obvious. Coupled with writing that valiantly attempts to walk the line between sensitively handling the mortal dilemmas of your houseboat guests and not completely bumming you out,[1] it's a pleasant sojourn in lavish surroundings.

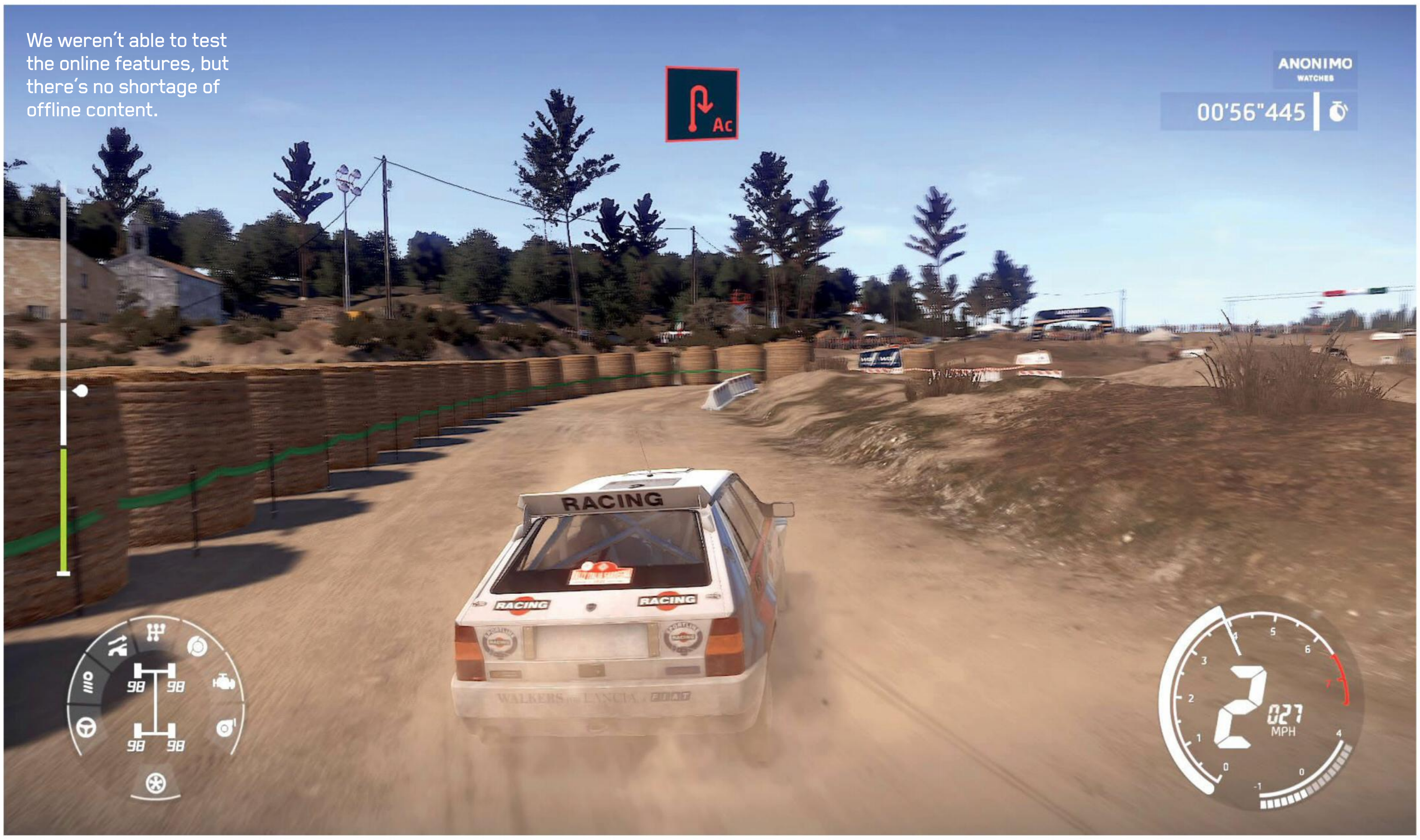
Onboard activities take the form of a satisfying loop that doesn't feel dissimilar from the pure rush of endorphins that is Slime Rancher. But, instead of making moolah the be-all-and-end-all, the framing here leaves you feeling a little less empty. Instead, you're encouraged to think of resource gathering and refinement in terms of how it can make your guests happier or more comfortable. Your interactions with your guests are still limited and mechanical but this framing, and the fact that they can refuse your hugs and gifts, makes it all feel a bit less soulless.[2]

With a focus on care and comfort, this is textbook cosy gaming. Its world of spirits is one you'll want to get lost in and there's unlikely to be a single guest you won't be endeared to by journey's end. Set sail under a snuggly blanket as the nights begin to pick up a chill, and let your heart be warmed. **Jess Kinghorn**

8 PlayStation. Official Magazine – UK



FOOTNOTES [1] Even with mortality as a theme, it avoids being bleak. [2] The narrative design makes your duties slightly more complicated than just feeding someone, then kicking them off into the Everdoor.



We weren't able to test the online features, but there's no shortage of offline content.

RALLY MCBEAL

@Jim_Crikey

WRC 9 FIA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

7
PlayStation Official Magazine - UK

Finishes in style, but takes damage along the way

PS4
WRC 9
THE OFFICIAL GAME
3
nacon

INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB NACON
DEV KYLOTONN

Do you find driving too simple, in games or in real life? Are you tired of turning cars when and where you want with very little effort? Isn't the ability to keep the vehicle on the road without thinking *boring*? You need to try a rally game! As existing WRC fans know, the experience is as much about constant mental vigilance as it is about quick reactions.

The redesigned career mode returns, including crew management via a (very) simple card system, and the ability to choose which events to enter for each day. If you don't want to play as a manager, you can dive into Seasons to play a championship as driver only.

One thing the WRC series has always struggled with slightly, and something this entry still does not fully resolve, is deciding which audience it wants to sell itself to. The very first thing you'll be asked is your experience with racing sims, so that it can set up assists accordingly. However, there's simply not the range or generosity of assists on offer that other games have, with the result that there is no setup suitable for people who might be avid rally fans, but aren't necessarily racing sim experts.

Petrolheads will be pleased to find that they can fiddle with things such as shock absorber rebound and brake bias, which significantly affect the car. It's not a hardcore sim, though. The physics aren't quite right, and it bothered us that most cars sound as though they're being powered by a furious bumblebee in a Tupperware box.

BRAKE FAST

The enormous number of tracks now includes rallies in Japan, New Zealand, and Kenya. The way the various road surfaces affect handling is very impressive, and dynamic weather means things could change halfway through a track. Snow is always a challenge, gravel threatens to throw your car off the track at every turn, and asphalt is a blessed relief… until it starts raining, and you regret your choice of tyres.

WRC 9's not the most impressive-looking racer on PS4, but the rain and sun effects are *very* good. It runs smoothly in local split-screen multiplayer, although it's impossible to keep an eye on both the track and the pace notes with half a screen. Unfortunately, we find at time of writing that the game is liable to crash every few races in this mode, something that happened to us once solo, too.

Variety is provided in the form of challenges (such as using a damaged car in extreme conditions), and classic and 'bonus' cars offer a different or even more challenging experience. The test area, too, is a brilliant idea. This is essentially a huge playground for you to practise in and, best of all, you can adjust various settings under the hood as you play until you find your perfect setup. If only we could tweak the physics as well.

VERDICT

If you love racing sims and the WRC, you'll get a lot out of this; but for the second year running, if you can only pick one rally game, Dirt 2.0 is the better choice. **Luke Kemp**

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB DEEP SILVER **DEV** OWLCAT GAMES

Miss
Miss
Miss
Miss
DREAD SKELETON SOLDIER

PATHFINDER: KINGMAKER – DEFINITIVE EDITION

Embrace the original sin?

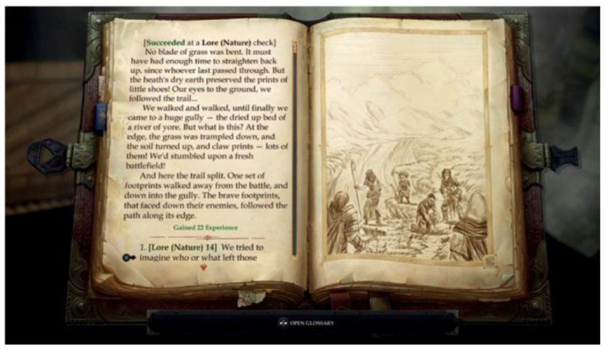
"Friendship lasts forever," screeches our Elf ranger with the inflection of a spoilt Cali girl as she puts an arrow into yet another bandit. If Frodo Baggins had had to walk into Mordor with Katy Perry he'd have dropped the Ring off at the border. We're made of sterner stuff.

Such idiosyncrasies can drag you out of the world Pathfinder: Kingmaker goes to great lengths to create. Ultimately, however, the wealth of lore at your fingertips trumps any Legally Blonde moments. Being based on the tabletop game of the same name helps, and at every turn you get to bathe in lore, scraps of detail, and stat-check-led narrative segments that reward with XP and plot twists.[1]

There's a lot to the game, which builds from a simple party-based dungeon explorer into a kingdom sim where you micromanage the world as much as your team's stats, classes, and gear. What holds Pathfinder back is its steep learning curve. Combat is real-time tactics, but a console-friendly turn-based mode can ease you into things. Still, there's so much happening on screen that doesn't translate fully to using a DualShock.

With patience you can master the fiddly battle menus, and the wealth of content[2] banishes any frustrations to a deep, dark dungeon. Outside of combat menus are a joy to navigate on R2. The sense of immersion helps break down the barriers of the game's PC origins, as whether it's cooking campfire meals or using a character's lore knowledge to seek new narrative pathways, there are roles here you'll enjoy playing for weeks. **Ian Dean**

7
PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

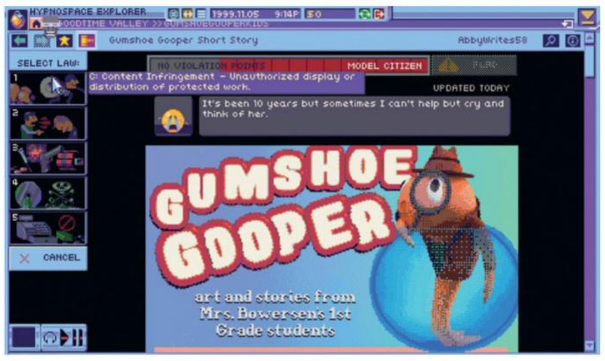


[Succeeded at a Lore (Nature) check]
No blade of grass was bent. It must have had enough time to straighten back up, since whoever last passed through. But the heath's dry earth preserved the prints of little shoes! Our eyes to the ground, we followed the trail...
We walked and walked, until finally we came to a huge gully — the dried up bed of a river of yore. But what is this? At the edge, the grass was trampled down, and the soil turned up, and claw prints — lots of them! We'd stumbled upon a fresh battlefield!
And here the trail split. One set of footprints walked away from the battle, and down into the gully. The brave footprints, that faced down their enemies, followed the path along its edge.
Gained 22 Experience
1. [Lore (Nature) 14] We tried to imagine who or what left those

---

FOOTNOTES 1 These text-based sequences recall the tabletop game and contain illustrated book pages. **2** This edition has all the PC version's DLC, some of which alters how the game plays.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB NO MORE ROBOTS **DEV** TENDERSHOOT, RATALAIKA



C: Content Infringement - Unauthorized display or distribution of protected work.

It's been 10 years but sometimes I can't help but cry and think of her.

HYPNOSPACE OUTLAW

Caught in the '90s net

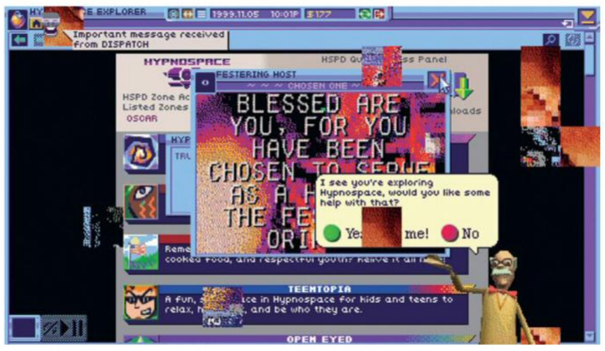
There's something unnerving about the world of Hypnospace, beside the fact it's a dreamlike internet users jack into while they sleep. This 1999 is reminiscent of our own with subtle differences (like the teen obsession with the musical genre coolpunk, and the three-player sport trennis).

As a volunteer moderator for Hypnospace as the company gears up for the Year 2000 update, you're assigned cases to investigate. Different Zones open up as you progress. These are essentially web-ring groupings of community pages (such as the painfully '90s Teentopia or the conspiracy-riddled Open-Eyed). Early on, cases are simple and have you flagging things like copyrighted content, but they quickly become more complicated, requiring you to uncover secret unlisted pages by searching tags or figuring out passwords in order to clamp down on illegal music sharing. Gameplay is limited, but bursting with creativity, from navigating browser maps to finding hidden links.

Everything is presented in the style of '90s websites (compressed music, spinning GIFs, and questionable writing) as you nose around a virtual desktop.[1] Even so, you get a sense of the community and individual users, which means that when you begin to unravel a sinister conspiracy you do feel like you're peeking behind the curtain into a real space. It's masterfully done, and *very* funny.[2]

There's a lot of text, but you only have to read enough to get the information you need. It's more of a detective game, offering just enough guidance to ensure your snooping genuinely feels like an investigation into the denizens of this strange, surreal internet. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

8
PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK



Important message received from DISPATCH

I see you're exploring Hypnospace, would you like some help with that?

E EXPLORER
1999.11.05 10:01P
$177
HYPNOSPACE
HSPD Zone Ac
Listed Zones
OSCAR
FESTERING HOST
CHOSEN ONE
BLESSED ARE YOU, FOR YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO SERVE AS A H THE FE ORI
Ye
me!
No
TEENTOPIA
A fun, ce in Hypnospace for kids and teens to relax, , and be who they are.
OPEN EYED

FOOTNOTES 1 Controller navigation is simple, and you can use a USB keyboard to type into the search bar if you want. **2** There are optional stories to uncover. Just what *did* happen at Coolfest '99?

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB RAW FURY **DEV** UPSTREAM ARCADE

WEST OF DEAD

A Hellishly tough roguelike shooter

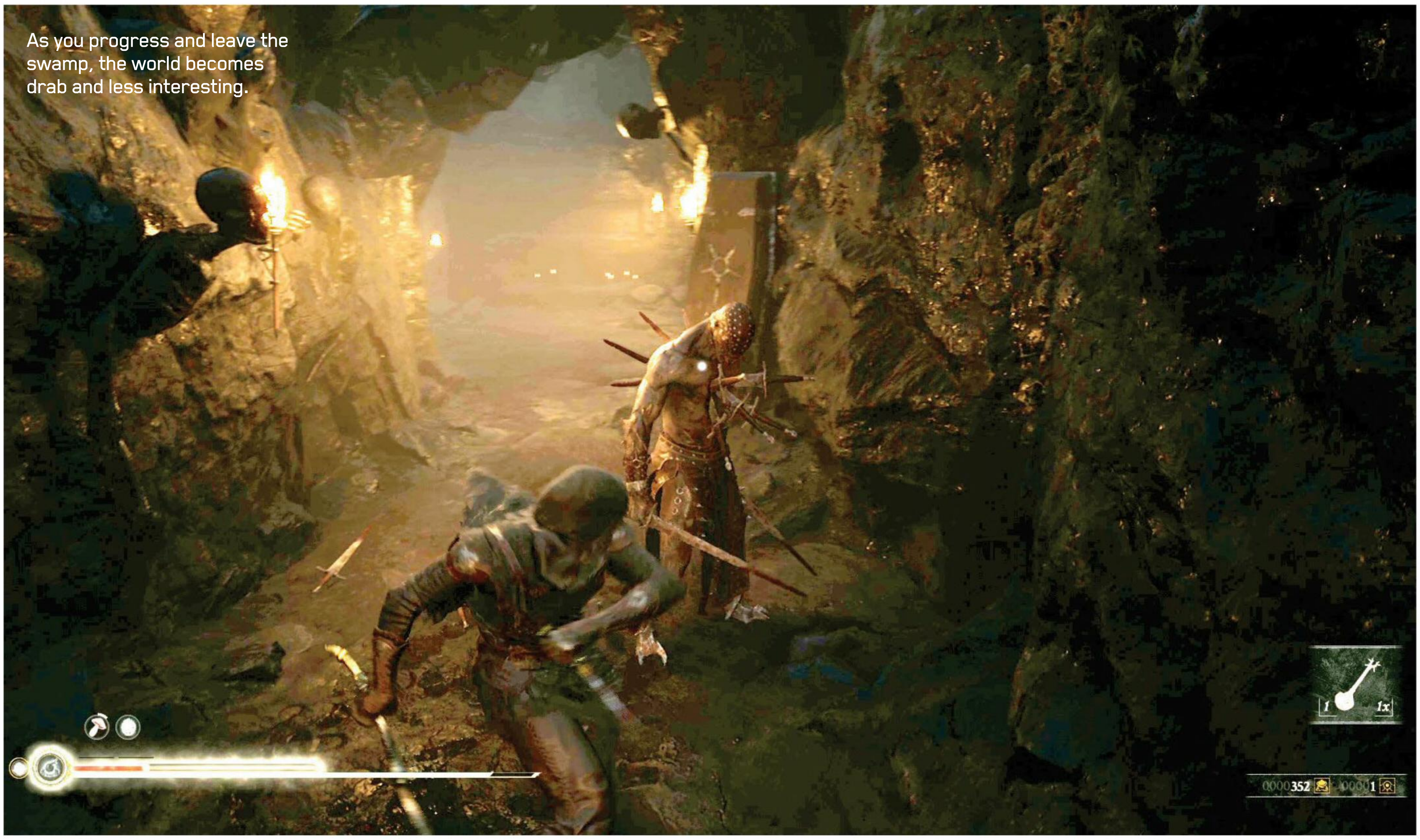
Ron Perlman's skeletal gunslinger sounds weary – as well you would if you'd been killed so many times. Upstream Arcade's twin-stick roguelike issues the kind of granite-hard challenge that will invite a certain type of player to crack their knuckles and steel themselves for the purgatorial onslaught to come. Yet the level completion stats suggest most are likely to retreat whimpering from its shadowy corners, waving the white flag long before they reach the finish.

Still, you *usually* walk through the saloon doors at the start of each run knowing exactly where you went wrong on the last. After a few attempts, you grow attuned to the deliberate pace of its taut, cover-based encounters. You know how long a destructible barrier has before it crumbles and you need to skid across to the next. You remember how many rounds you have left in the chamber as you pop up to fire back. You realise when it's time to back out of its combat rooms, leading a zombie or slavering hound into the cramped corridors beyond, where you're not constantly having dynamite flung at your feet. And you learn the precise moment you need to roll to dodge a huge blade as it whirls towards your flaming bonce.[1]

But losing it all[2] still stings, not least since some runs stack the odds unfairly. You might wander into a room where two shooters are entirely shrouded by the inky shadows, where a wall obstructs your view of an advancing threat, or an enemy-stunning lantern stubbornly refuses to light. When the RNG is against you, too, West Of Dead feels someway south of a good time. **Chris Schilling**

5
PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

FOOTNOTES 1 Your undead lawman sounds like Hellboy, but looks more like Ghost Rider in a poncho. **2** Almost all. Banking Sin from slain enemies unlocks some items that persist between runs.


As you progress and leave the swamp, the world becomes drab and less interesting.

SOULS-LESS

@sammgreer

6 PlayStation. Official Magazine · UK

MORTAL SHELL

Cracking the Dark Souls' magic formula?

PS4
MORTAL SHELL

INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB PLAYSTACK
DEV COLD SYMMETRY

The thing about nakedly copying one of the most-lauded games of all time is you invite a comparison that's inevitably going to be unflattering. Mortal Shell is the latest in a long line of 'soulslikes', games eager to be Dark Souls. Yet the closer these games get to the original, the clearer the gulf between them becomes.

Slow, deliberate combat with parries and heavy swings, against deadly enemies who should never be underestimated. A hub for your upgrades and NPCs. Lore drip-fed through item descriptions. A currency for levelling up that's lost upon death. Where Dark Souls transports you to the main world via a giant crow, Mortal Shell opts for a big fish. It's familiar but not comforting.

Dark Souls is vague but it throws a big, fancy cinematic to kick things off before you enter its mysterious world. Mortal Shell instead banks fully on ambiguity, withholding even the smallest morsel of plot, dropping you in with nothing to go on. So far, so Dark Souls.

Mortal Shell is a game that also shamelessly embraces the notorious difficulty of its inspiration. Crucially though, its difficulty tips into feeling plain sadistic. An early boss fight where you're dropped through a trap door each time and forced to lose a chunk of health before the fight feels like a cruel joke. Bosses are basic, with difficulty inflated solely by cheap tricks.

You play as an undead figure who can possess the bodies of fallen warriors. These four 'shells' effectively fill out the archetypal RPG classes, even if they broadly overlap. There's little customisation (visual or otherwise) and you're locked into your shell till you find another one. All the joys of fine-tuning a build are minimal here and there's never any sense of self-expression.

> "BOSSES ARE BASIC, WITH DIFFICULTY INFLATED SOLELY BY CHEAP TRICKS."

SHELL SHOCKED

It's not entirely devoid of charm. After a brief tutorial, where its aesthetic aspiration to be a perpetual Nine Inch Nails album cover makes itself felt, it seems like Mortal Shell might just build a little of its own character – but once you leave this swamp the fall off in charm is steep indeed.

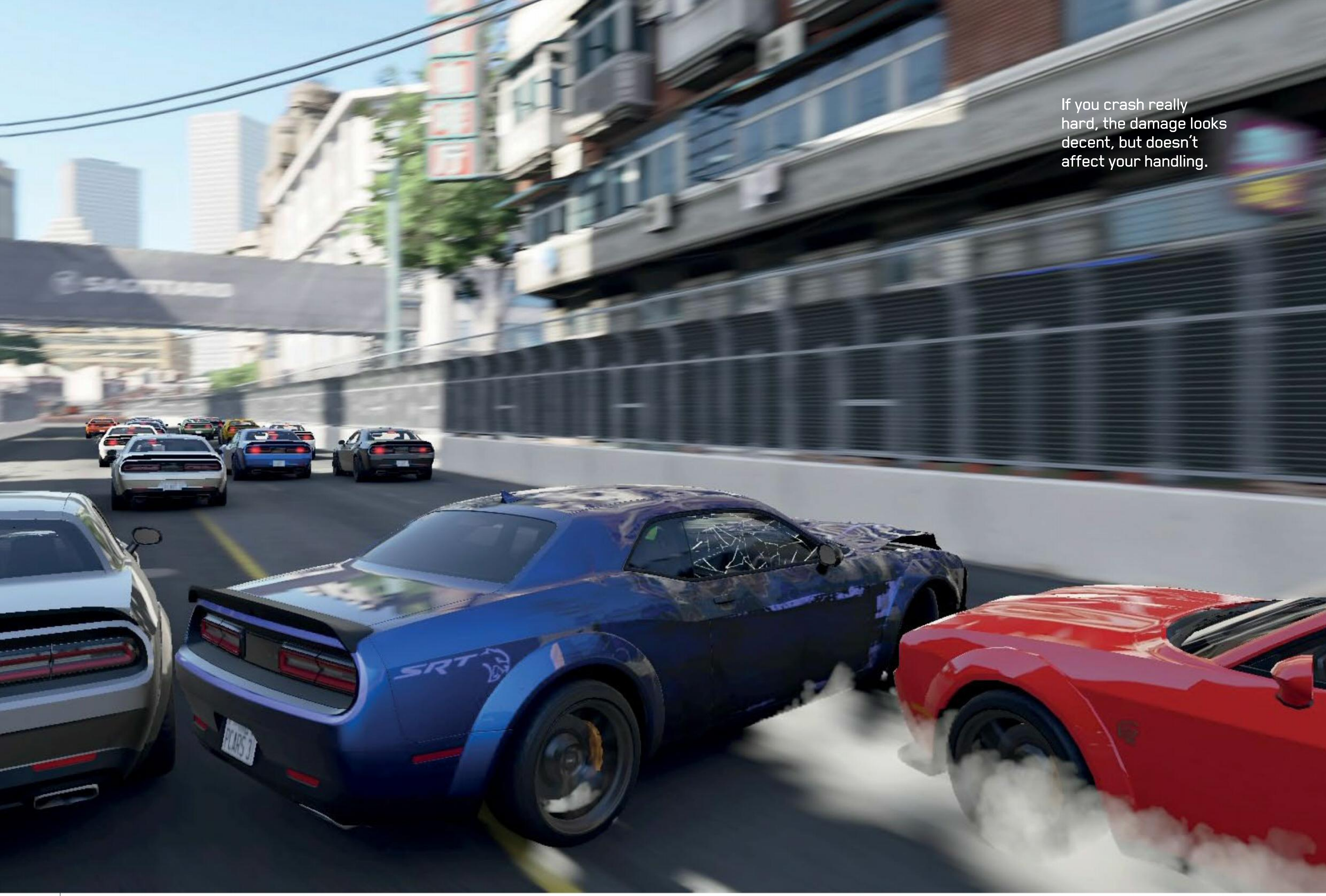
From here you go to abstract expanses of dull rock and stone. Dark Souls would tuck a giant hydra in a lake down the back of a castle; Mortal Shell repeats the same series of gloomy rooms with the odd palette swap or change of weather.

This is Mortal Shell's problem. It feels *thin*, trying to offer everything you've come to expect but stretched too far, with whole areas feeling slapped together in a hurry, enemies thoughtlessly lined up not as inhabitants but simply as obstacles. You never feel like you're *existing* in this world.

There have been many attempts to make a game like Dark Souls and few have even come close. Mortal Shell succeeds in only in killing off my interest in this narrow me-too sub-genre.

VERDICT

Despite tweaks to the formula and some interesting ideas, Mortal Shell is tired and familiar while also much less than its inspiration. This Dark-Souls-like should stay dead. **Sam Greer**



If you crash really hard, the damage looks decent, but doesn't affect your handling.

@catgonecrazy

6

PlayStation. Official Magazine - UK

PROJECT CARS 3

"Er... guys? Who replaced my dashboard with Lego?"

So. Many. Problems. In fact, the definite end of Project Cars' pursuit of the hardcore sim market isn't the main issue. This is intended to be more of a spiritual successor to PS3's Shift 2: Unleashed, and arguably an action-packed, gamified, semi-realistic racer is exactly what the increasingly po-faced genre needs right now. But this isn't it. This isn't convincing. At all.

From the impotent collisions with cosmetic-only damage to the uncharacteristically jarring and cheap-looking weather transitions, former high points associated with the series seem downgraded here. Worse, the racing action is unbalanced, both by the upgrades system, which can be cheesed a little, and by the AI, which is downright unfair. Rivals' cars find inexplicable speed on the straights, discover phantom grip in key corners and sometimes (but infrequently) completely disappear into the distance. But then in the very next race in the same series, you'll win by seven seconds. No competition is fun for long when it's not a fair fight.

Even the corner mastery system feels unbalanced. This was first introduced in Need For Speed: Shift and is a truly great idea, turning every corner into a minigame to be perfected, here marked by floating icons over the track, which work really well as sighters for braking zones and apexes on blind corners. Trouble is, the criteria for perfecting a turn appears to be arbitrary, as oversteer kicks, exit lifts, and even wall taps can still be rewarded with a 'perfect' message, making it unfulfilling.

INFO

FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB BANDAI NAMCO
DEV SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS

WINNERS DON'T WIN

Many of the simulation elements of the first game are gone, which means no tyre warming, no practice sessions, and no qualifying. Instead, races are normally three-lap affairs, forcing ultra-aggressive driving due to their brevity. Not that winning matters as much any more, with new progression criteria to meet, such as hitting a particular top speed, passing cars cleanly, or making it around the track for one lap without touching anything – which is easier said than done when the AI is so tap-happy.

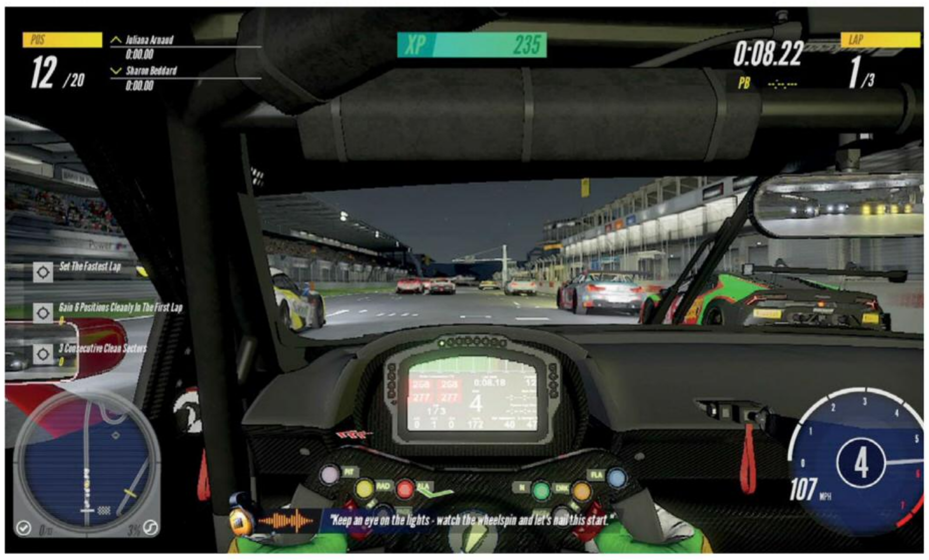
As a result, this breathless, quickfire career mode feels very shallow, and only really works well when you're alone on the track, trying to hit the gold-equivalent hot lap time or post a mean average of three successive laps to win the prize, which is usually more XP. But the XP-fest feels like overkill as you fill up countless bars with seemingly everything you do. Used a view? Get XP!

To the game's credit, the pad handling is the best yet in a modern, serious racing game, allowing you to grab your car by the scruff of the neck and kick the back out into a Jeremy-Clarkson-style powerdrift. And

"RACES ARE NORMALLY THREE-LAP AFFAIRS, FORCING ULTRA-AGGRESSIVE DRIVING."

Right With such short races, the weather has to change unrealistically quickly.

Below See the checklist? After lap one you may as well park up to get space.


12 /20
XP
235
0:08.22
1/3
Set The Fastest Lap
Gain 6 Positions Cleanly In The First Lap
3 Consecutive Clean Sectors
107
4
"Keep an eye on the lights - watch the wheelspin and let's nail this start"

Above left The pad handling's superb but it still feels great with a good wheel.

with 50-plus locations and more than 130 track layouts, that means a *lot* of driving fun if you just want to drive the 200-strong list of licensed cars.

There's also a very enjoyable Rivals mode in which you can enter a time-limited community leaderboard challenge, with daily, weekly, and monthly events, each with a different car and track, and 30 tries in which to beat the world. The game shines whenever it's you versus the road, so this is a highlight. This calendar-based approach is also evident in the GT Sport-like online subsection, where you need to register for a race and qualify to decide your start position.

PROSAIC MOSAIC

An unbalanced but otherwise purring game might be permissible, but Project Cars 3 is a technical mess at times, with shocking dynamic resolution scaling of independent elements of the action, which can see you squinting to read your dashboard because it's just a kaleidoscope of squares, followed by the track turning jaggy and cars looking serrated. Wet weather can see the framerate plummet to sub-30fps, reflections in the track are sometimes a garbled mess (but great in your bonnet, oddly) and glitches, draw-in, and flickering are common.

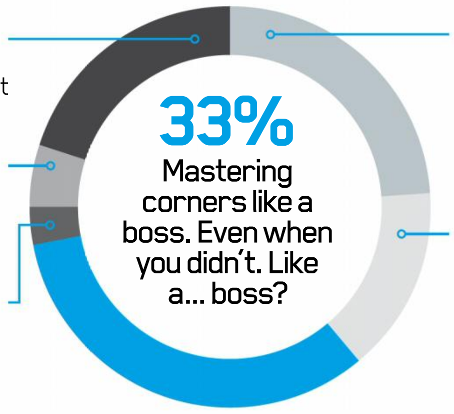
If you can ignore the visual frailties, balancing issues, and gutting of beloved simulation elements, Project Cars 3 is not completely disastrous. But 'not completely disastrous' is hardly a quote to put on the box, is it? Look elsewhere.

VERDICT

A patchy, unbalanced, and shallow racer with obvious technical issues on PS4. Chasing lap times is fun thanks to the superb pad control and track list, but everything else is disappointing. **Justin Towell**

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN… PROJECT CARS 3



33% Mastering corners like a boss. Even when you didn't. Like a… boss?

20% Pondering whether to try to finish the checklist on the last lap.

5% Scouring the menu for the old race weekend career mode.

3% Trying not to let your choice of upgrades tip your car into the next performance tier.

24% Squeezing the throttle deliberately too hard to get the back to step out. Mmmmm. Slidey.

15% Restarting a three-lap Pace Setter event because you exceeded track limits by 6mm.

STAT PACK

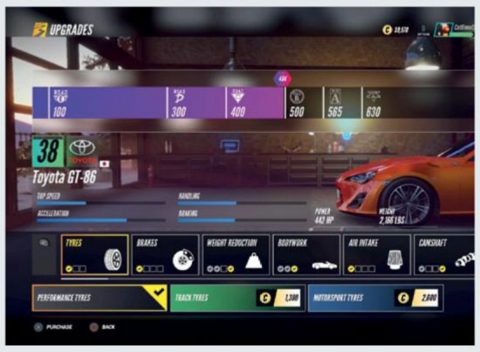
234 Accolades to unlock. Each has a bar that fills up after you race, giving a sense of achievement.

51 Track locations, though a handful of those are historic/modern duplicates. Like old Hockenheim!

211 The total number of cars available to choose from in Quick Race mode, right from the get-go.

32 The highest number of cars that can compete in one race. It's impressive – and actually works.

HOW TO… MAKE PROGRESS FAST



Your first car can be upgraded cheaply and easily, allowing you to enter many races and even clear the first few tiers of events. Upgrade weight reduction and turbo mods without pushing the bar into the next tier and you'll be very competitive.

LOVING/HATING

ROAD WARRIOR

The ability to pick any car and track and go racing, right from the start. Career mode needs unlocks, the other modes don't.

SUNDAY DRIVER

The poor show from the PS4 version. The PC version isn't exactly a looker (even on Ultra), but our version's shocking at times.

IS IT BETTER THAN?

PS4
PLAYSTATION VR COMPATIBLE
GRAN TURISMO SPORT
3

NO

GT Sport is technically rock solid, has more realistic movement and better visuals. Better racing too.

PS4
V-RALLY 4
3

YES

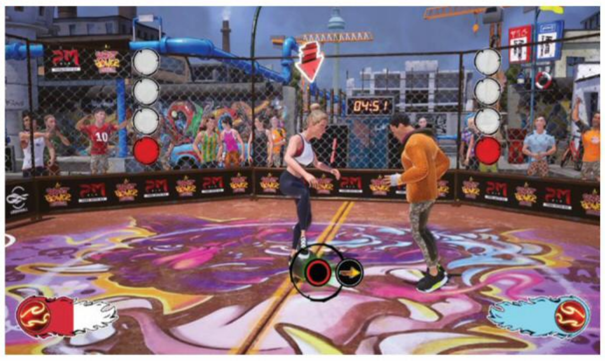
Project Cars 3 has better handling and control, more ambition, and more involved gameplay.

PS4
DAY ONE EDITION
GRID
3

NO

New Grid is another underwhelming reimagining of an old game, but it's far slicker.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB MAXIMUM GAMES **DEV** SFL INTERACTIVE, GAMJUN



STREET POWER FOOTBALL

Dropped the ball on this one

With FIFA Street swallowed by the main series, a new game concentrating on street football has… well, an open goal ahead of it. Yet despite the fact that there's effectively no competition, we still can't recommend this. And not only (but undeniably partly) because of the quite frankly terrifying caricatures of real stars of the sport.

The fundamental issue of presentation is odd. Horrific avatars aside, our first experience of the game – heading straight for what passes for a story mode – was freestyle champion Sean Garnier spending several minutes against a backdrop of game footage telling us how great he is.[1] Once in the game proper, we find something unsure of what it wants to be. The players are real, but the pitches are not. There are plenty of flashy tricks, as you'd expect, but this primarily consists of awkwardly mashing ○ with little skill involved. More bizarre still, there are *power-ups*, and special moves that allow us to do things like leap 20 feet into the air. It's daft enough to be unrealistic, but not daft enough to be over-the-top fun.

The best mode is Panna, 1v1 matches in tiny arenas where points are awarded for scoring goals or humiliating your opponent with a nutmeg. Fancy footwork is initiated by basic QTEs, a missed opportunity of epic proportions. The Trickshot mode is devastated by a terrible aiming system, and Freestyle – ostensibly a show of your ball control[2] – is a dull rhythm and QTE hybrid.

It's not terrible, but it's not the game we (or anybody else) wanted either. This game gets tired long before 90 minutes have passed. **Luke Kemp**

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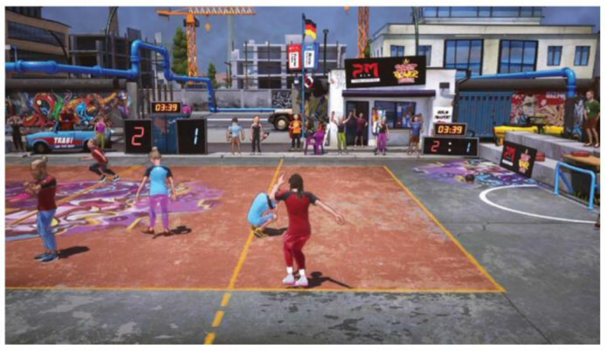
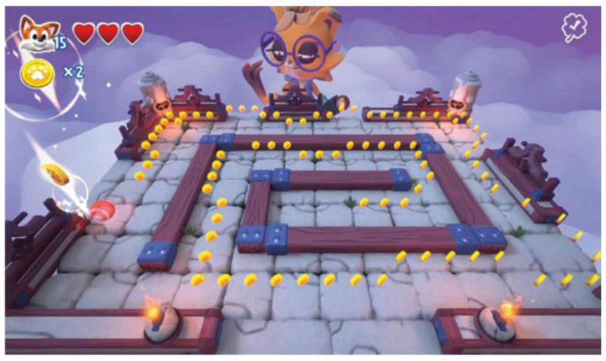


FOOTNOTES [1] The game is full of scenes where Garnier talks at the player, a real (and smug) person with freakish computer people running around behind him. Thank goodness they're skippable. [2] No.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB PQUBE **DEV** PLAYFUL STUDIOS



NEW SUPER LUCKY'S TALE

Can you dig it?

Lil' Lucky is Lost. Sucked into a portal created by the dimension-bending Book Of Ages, he's separated from his big sister. But searching for the book's scattered pages and finding a way home is the least of his troubles as the threat of the evil magician Jinx and his underlings looms large on the horizon.[1]

If you're already a fan of a particular purple dragon, then you know what to expect from this mascot platformer. Each themed world is brought to life with visual direction that wouldn't feel out of place in a Saturday-morning cartoon, and each one's selection of levels sequester book pages as well as more collectibles than you can shake your tail at. As a fox, Lucky can pounce and burrow to both attack enemies and uncover secrets, and there's a weight to the young pup's movement that feels in line with the sort of barrelling around you can expect from any toddler freshly re-energised by their afternoon nap.[2]

From side-scrolling platforming to something that reminds us of Super Monkey Ball just a wee bit, there's a good variety of levels in each world. While we say there are plenty of hidden collectibles to find, Lucky's game doesn't quite nail the sense of exploration and discovery in the way its mauve forbear does; you probably won't need the finest-toothed comb to see all there is to see. But just because it doesn't resonate in exactly the same way Spyro did for us all those years ago, it doesn't mean that cute-as-a-button Lucky won't be some small person's favourite, or that the game won't get them all nostalgic years down the line. **Jess Kinghorn**

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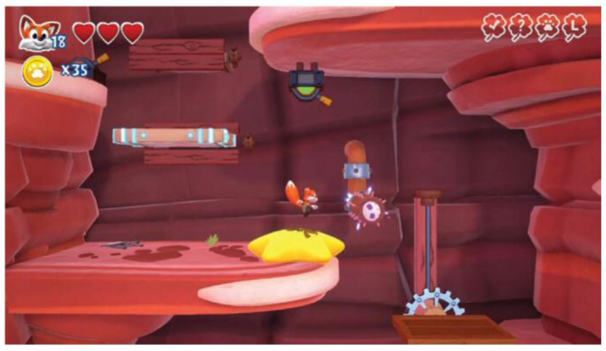
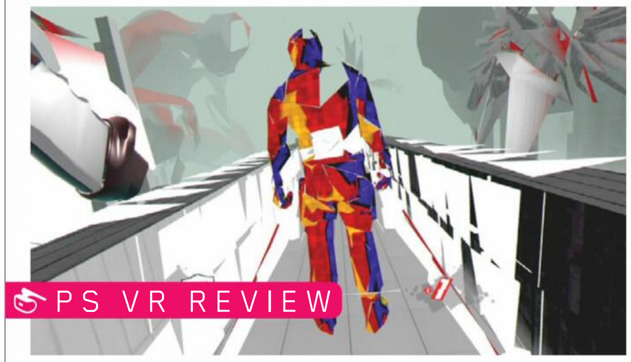


FOOTNOTES [1] The game begins with a lore dump. The colourful, cartoony visuals are the only thing that saves this exposition-heavy opening. [2] It takes a little bit of getting used to.

INFO **FORMAT** PS VR **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB CLOUDHEAD GAMES **DEV** CLOUDHEAD GAMES



PS VR REVIEW

PISTOL WHIP

A thumping ballet of bullets

The best thing about PS VR is the way it can persuade even the most self-conscious wallflower to bust a move as long as they're doing something that makes them feel extremely bad-ass. Rhythm game Pistol Whip is essentially Beat Saber's shooty-bang cousin, but its genius is that it can feel just like playing an old-school arcade lightgun shooter.

Across 15 themed levels without any contrived plot to run through,[1] it's a no-nonsense on-rails shooting gallery as you shoot, dodge, and melee-attack bad guys. Blasting them as they pop out in front of you from above and below is perfectly enjoyable in its own right, but to chase those high scores you have to start thinking how the game wants you to play to the beat, and then its rhythmic magic really clicks.

Shooting to the beat is easy enough thanks to the stompy-bassy electro soundtrack – regardless of your musical taste, it feels totally in sync with the action, while the visuals combine the minimalist clarity of Superhot with the abstract psychedelia of Rez Infinite. There's some ballsiness to timing shots since you could give your foe a chance to let off a round first.[2] Even riskier is pulling off the pistol whip of the title – though you're rewarded with maximum points as well as instant reload and armour recovery if you manage it.

Mastery is ultimately what will keep pulling you back in, and thanks to a wealth of modifiers, you can tweak the gunplay to be as accessible or as challenging as you want. Stick on Deadeye and you'll discover just how much you've been relying on the default aim assist. Truly a whip-smart workout. **Alan Wen**

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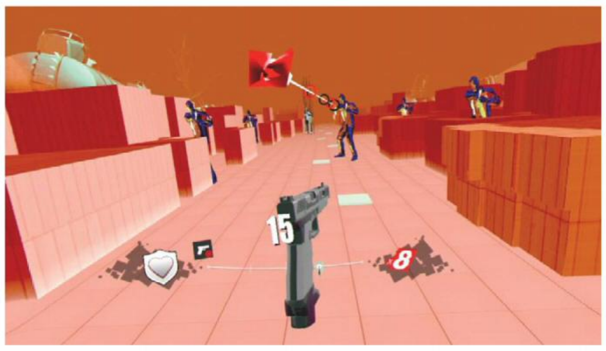
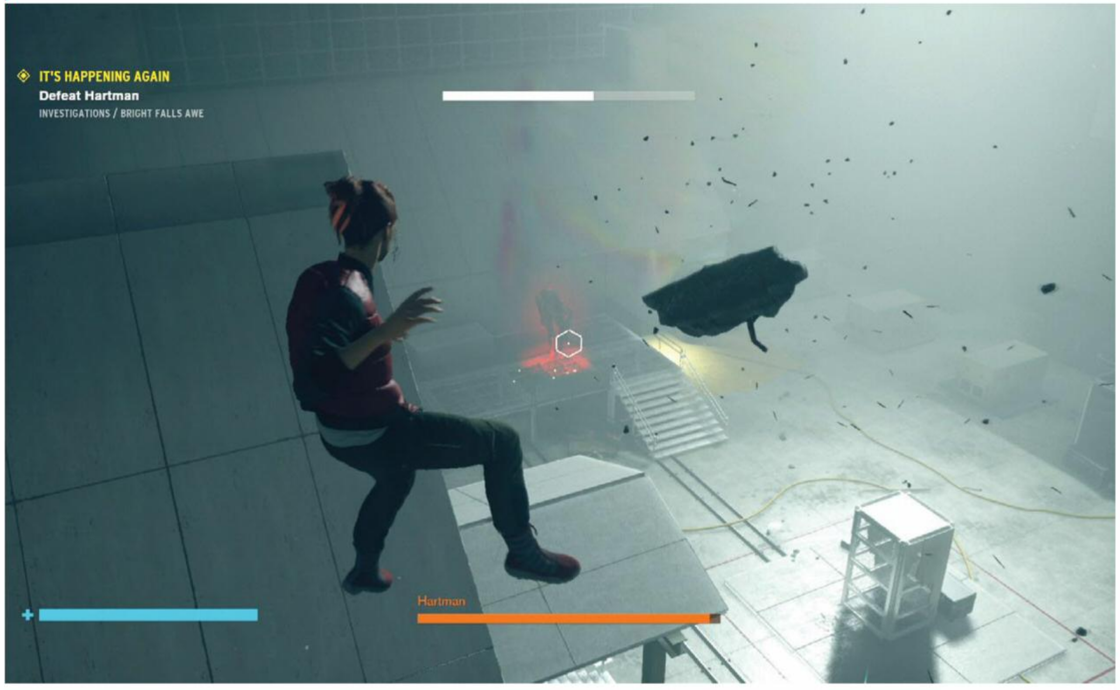


FOOTNOTES [1] More DLC is on its way, including The Concierge, which will string together an actual story. [2] Enemy bullets travel in bullet-time with a trail so you can dodge.

INFO **FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** OUT NOW
PUB 505 GAMES **DEV** REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT



WAKE UP!

@KoeniginKatze

CONTROL – AWE

Still wonderfully weird but is it dyna-mite?

8
PlayStation. Official Magazine – UK

Here's one for you: if Alan Wake is Space Oddity, does that make Control Ashes To Ashes or Life On Mars? Answers on a postcard. But in the meantime, let's make one thing clear about this second expansion: if you haven't played that aforementioned 2010 game, you're going to miss out on much of the appeal of this crossover. Furthermore, if you're hoping that stranded author Wake will end his exile to the Dark Place in this expansion, you will be disappointed – but you'll nonetheless be excited by this teaser of what may be to come.

That's not to say there isn't plenty to enjoy besides the connective tissue that firmly places the two games in the same universe. Based in the previously locked-off Investigations sector and settling more into a horror angle, this expansion makes us fall in love with the Oldest House all over again. Slightly less combat-focussed than the previous expansion, The Foundation, we're out of the caves and back amid brutalist office space chic, hoovering up internal documents all the way down. The writing remains compelling, every page sprinkled with the balanced blend of mystery and 'everyone's just looking for the bathroom' mundanity that has always made Control's worldbuilding so enticing.

The new sticky grenade launcher weapon mod, Surge, is a welcome addition, providing explosions on demand (though we can't promise that we didn't accidentally blow ourselves up down a too-narrow corridor more than once). It's helpful against new and old Hiss variations as well as coming in very handy during this DLC's final showdown.

GLOW AWAY

Much of the main storyline revolves around light-based puzzles and boss encounters that pay homage to Alan Wake's combat through Control's existing mechanical framework; you won't be wrapping yourself up in Christmas lights to scare away the darkness but instead hurling power cores and floodlights at your problems. It makes for fairly simple conundrums but the Big Bad doesn't fail to re-instill a fear of the dark. Side-missions remain largely to-the-point but continue to showcase the charm of this weird world within a location.

VERDICT

Substantial, and makes us excited to see what's next in Remedy's Connected Universe. Our only question is 'Alan Wake remaster when?' **Jess Kinghorn**

LAST MONTH ON PS PLUS

@KoeniginKatze

We've always insisted that there's nothing wrong with a healthy competitive streak and a friendly match can really bring a team together. Unfortunately, my competitive streak is a bit weedy and, when threatened, it comes out swinging. As such, I'm banned from playing battle royales or fighters at OPM Towers – I'm told even muttered expletives carry further than you'd think in an open-plan office.

But thankfully, we were nowhere near the office when September's PS Plus lineup dropped so I was allowed to eff and Jeff to my heart's content in my own home – though perhaps not for the reasons you'd think.

You'd better have grabbed your frying pan, because the one and only **PLAYERUNKNOWN'S BATTLEGROUNDS** dropped into subscribers' libraries last month. Largely credited as the title that popularised the battle royale genre, you could gun for the glory of a chicken dinner either alone or as part of a team of four. Beyond that, it's a title that needs no further introduction… so we'll finish off by reminding you that referring to it as 'Plunk Bat,' while still fun to say, is not a term the creator approves of.

If facing off against 99 other opponents was a bit overwhelming, how about just one at a time in **STREET FIGHTER V**? While a solid fighter, this version didn't include all the bells and whistles of the Champion edition. Fortunately, redeeming it meant you could buy the Champion edition upgrade kit at a later point for the princely sum of £19.99. While that was a little expensive for an add-on, doing things that way was still a tad cheaper than buying the Champion Edition first for £24.99. Much like competitive esports, maths encourages a bout of expletive-laden muttering from me but maybe this will end up adding up for you.

COVID

WHO IS MOST AT RISK? WHAT CAN PREVENT IT?

thomaswimberly.com @thomaswimberly @thomaswimberlystudios

PLEASE TAKE THE SURVEY

qmul.ac.uk/covidence

Queen Mary
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THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

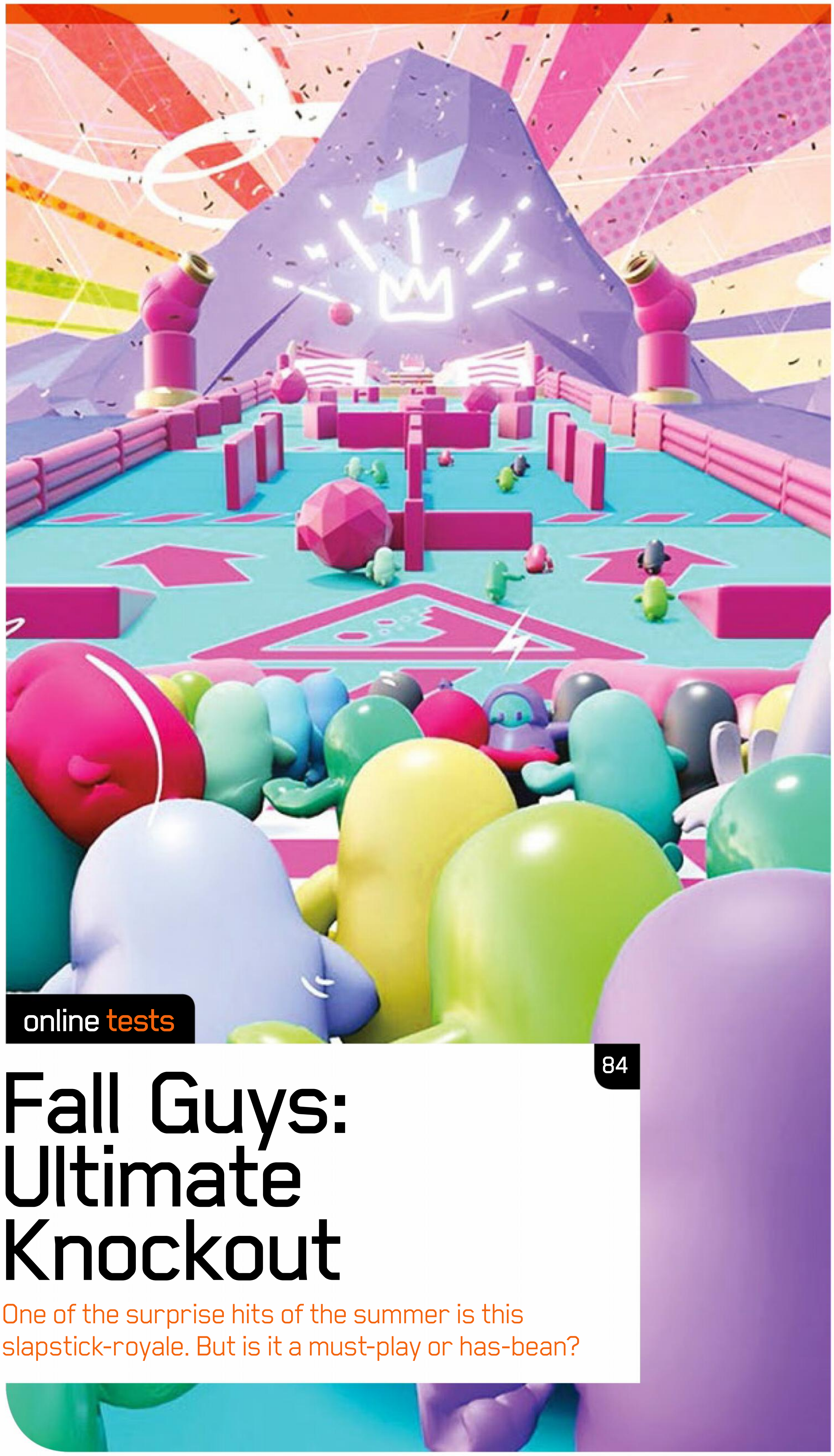
Swansea
University
Prifysgol
Abertawe

QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST

SIGN UP

network

online | the long game | dlc & live games



online tests

84

Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout

One of the surprise hits of the summer is this slapstick-royale. But is it a must-play or has-bean?

this month

the long game

086 Call Of Duty – Modern Warfare
More maps and bigger challenges – we explain why now's the time to get your boots back on the ground.

on the store

088 Ghost Of Tsushima – Legends
Jin's no longer a lone samurai. Grab up to three friends and tackle mythological monsters.

Live games

089 Rainbow Six Siege – Operation Shadow Legacy
Splinter Cell's veteran operative Sam Fisher drops in, packing a cracking rifle, to our great delight.

online tests

MULTIPLAYER MODES PUT
THROUGH THEIR PACES
BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING NOW

PS4
AVENGERS
16

MARVEL'S AVENGERS

Jess Kinghorn joins the Avengers Initiative

I've got to be honest, I've spent a lot of this month watching Black Widow flex as I wait for my online team mates to assemble. It'd also be remiss of me not to mention the arguments that broke out over who could play as agent Romanoff and Kamala Khan. Ms. Marvel remains a particular standout with much of the offline story resting on her capable, elasticated shoulders. I can't wait to see how the young heroine and the wider game come into their own over time – maybe I'll be forced out of my Black Widow comfort zone yet.

PS4
TOOLS UP!

TOOLS UP!

Oscar Taylor-Kent is longing to… decorate?

This one might not have a dedicated online mode, but using Share Play a friend can join you for some virtual local co-op. Which is probably for the best, as in this Overcooked-like the interior decorating-to-a-blueprint can get, um, pretty tense. Especially when later households challenge my team with icy floors, poltergeists, and (shudder) bricklaying. More a delegation-sim than Overcooked's pure franticness, when you get going this one is almost zen-like.

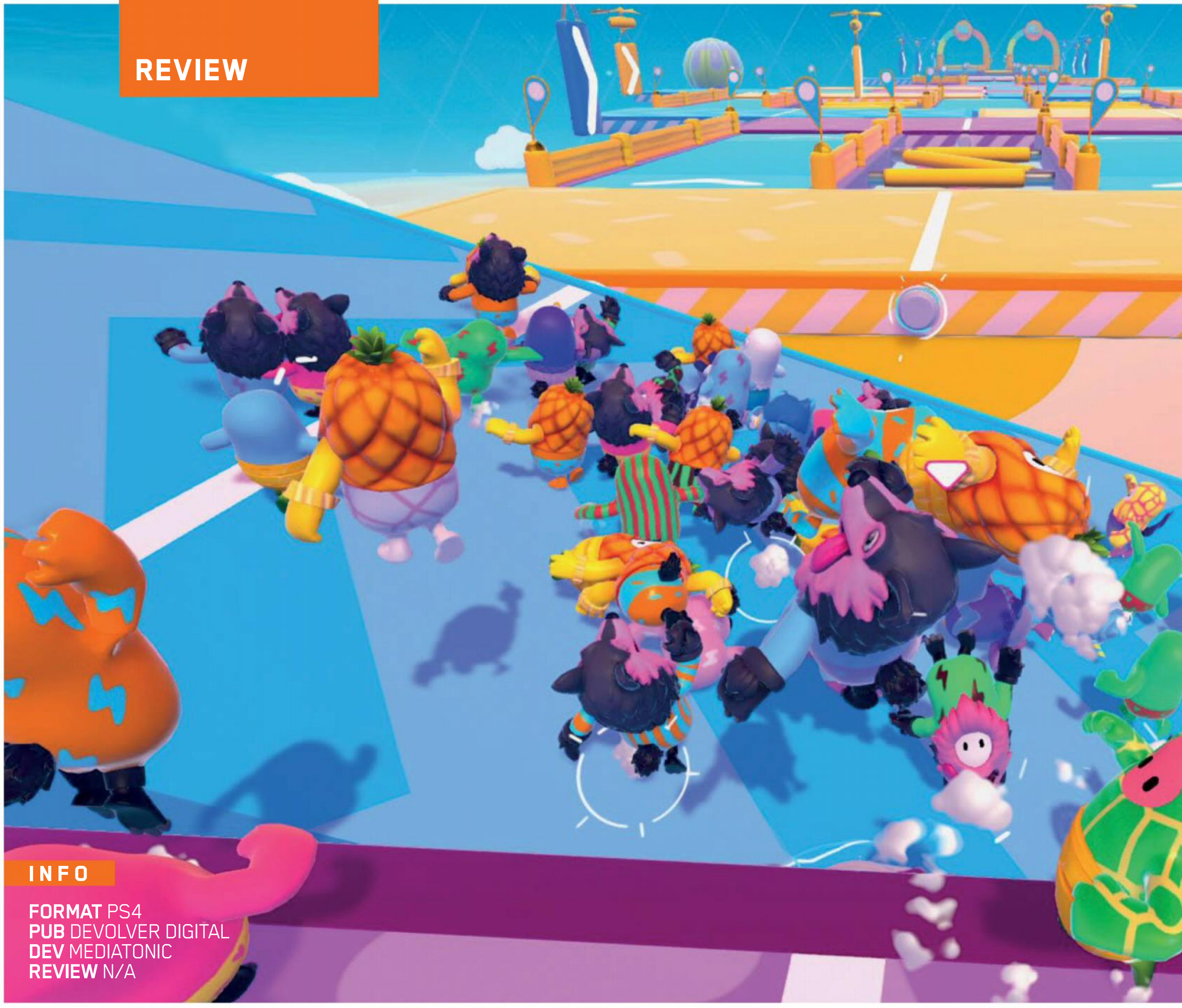
PS4
PREDATOR
HUNTING GROUNDS
18

PREDATOR: HUNTING GROUNDS

Ian Dean flexes his thumb muscles

While most online games change in new interesting ways, or shrivel and die, Predator: Hunting Grounds is resolutely the same. While there is new DLC to enjoy, including the original Dutch '87 Arnie, the moment-to-moment play is as it was at launch. We're still more likely to get a decent new Predator film as we are to step into the famous alien's size 10s. No changes does mean the swift matches remain as fast and superficial as they did at launch. Which is good. Still, this alien needs to evolve, and fast.

REVIEW



INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB DEVOLVER DIGITAL
DEV MEDIATONIC
REVIEW N/A

Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout

Nothing but good beans

After apocalypses, deserted wastelands, and zombies, Fall Guys drops in with something completely different. Rather than running around guns akimbo, players are instead placed onto a physics-based obstacle course. Participants are picked off by either falling into the drink or failing to run the full gauntlet before the end of the round.

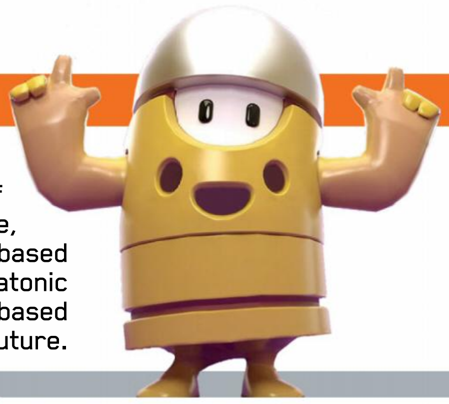
There's a good variety of routes to learn the inner workings of as you race towards the finish line. You'll be hopping over whirligigs, dashing between propellers, barrelling through false walls, and more besides. The physics system itself is more slapstick than frustrating; your little dude can be bowled over and sent careening far off course after anything heavier than the lightest tap but, while definitely squishy, if they get knocked down they can easily get up again.

GUY SQUAWKS

Amid the enjoyably unpredictable mayhem of Takeshi's-Castle-style courses, most shenanigans are 'every Guy for themself'. There are few avenues for directly interacting with other players beyond whooping, grabbing, and emotes. The scant few team activities on offer provide a welcome change of pace but feel less focussed as you pray that your collective flailing saves you from the elimination pile.

You earn more experience the more rounds in a row you survive and, as each round itself is so brief, the battle pass rarely feels like a slog to level up. Ultimately your mileage is likely to vary on whether you feel the rewards are worth it.

You can customise your little marshmallow using costume pieces



PLAYING DRESS UP
There is already a wealth of original costumes on the store, along with a crossover skin based on Enter The Gungeon. Mediatonic says it'll be adding more skins based on familiar faces in the future.

QUALIFIED
0/44

and changing your outfit's colour scheme. (The more stylish add-ons are locked behind two different kinds of in-game currency, or you can access them by levelling up the battle pass.) You earn Kudos for playing matches but the shiniest cosmetics generally require Crowns. You can earn the odd one via the battle pass but if you're desperate for the really pricey bells and whistles, you'll need to spend real-world money. Costumes are split into two halves, so you have to shell out twice to complete the look. But having perused the store, we personally don't mind rocking the launch week's free werewolf costume for a while yet.

While we are endeared to the cute 'n' squishy charms of Fall Guys, the catwalk isn't really what it's all about. It's that slapstick spirit of every guy for themself that keeps us coming back and earns it our recommendation.

VERDICT

A breath of fresh air in the battle-royale-adjacent arena. Good, old-fashioned fun and gaudy, harmless silliness for everyone that'll keep you coming back. **Jess Kinghorn**

Hyper Scape

You'd better believe the hyper – it's a winner

INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB UBISOFT
DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL
REVIEW N/A

Yes, it's yet another battle royale, but it genuinely brings something new to the undeniably crowded table. If other games left you cold, this just might be the one to get you hot under the collar. The bright and angular futuristic city setting immediately sets Hyper Scape apart, not to mention the rapid movement and superhuman double jumps. The weapon selection is great, and the 'hacks' – cooldown-dependent abilities enabling you to do things like summon a wall or teleport a short distance – introduce a new level of tactical thinking. Upon death (in Squads) you become a ghost, and then it's a race to the nearest revive point so you can get back into the fight. The whole experience is a fresh, exciting, hectic new take on the genre.

VERDICT

Against all odds, Ubisoft's take on the battle royale genre feels entirely new, and proves to be one of the company's best games of 2020. **Luke Kemp**

Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles

A fantasy that's best shared with friends

INFO

FORMAT PS4
PUB SQUARE ENIX
DEV SQUARE ENIX, GAME DESIGNERS STUDIO
REVIEW N/A

Originally released on Nintendo GameCube and requiring four handheld consoles to play as intended, Crystal Chronicles has always been a niche entry just in terms of sheer accessibility. Yes, the Remaster looks gorgeous, has English voice acting, and new weapons and bosses – but most importantly it includes online multiplayer (though local play is absent). This makes it much more convenient to sit down and play. You can host public or private games, as well as matchmake – a welcome addition. Hacking enemies, combining magic, and nabbing treasure is fun with pals. However, campaign progress only counts for the game host (though a free lite version of some of the game makes it easier to do).

VERDICT

A refreshingly focused change from the Destiny-like models that proliferate. This is an adventure you and your friends shouldn't miss out on. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

the long game

GAMES WE'RE STILL PLAYING – AND YOU SHOULD BE TOO

UPDATE

Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare

No need to rage against the machine gun

The campaign may have proved to be a questionable bag of politically-charged ferrets, but Modern Warfare's multiplayer was an instant hit. It only became better as time went on, in large part thanks to the decision to launch with the Battle Pass system instead of the traditional season pass and map pack DLC. Gone are the days of getting kicked out of a lobby because your friend bought a map pack that you didn't.

Since it was released, Modern Warfare has gained 14 multiplayer maps, six Gunfight maps, and four Ground War maps – all for free, for everybody. Throw in a bunch of free weapons and almost endless challenges to complete, and even the outrageous prices being charged for cosmetic bundles can (just about) be forgiven.

It looks like COD: WWII is destined to be the last entry in the series with lootboxes, and good riddance. Heck, we were even encouraged to spend 1,000 COD Points on a Battle Pass ourselves, as the premier unlockables include enough points to buy the next season's pass (provided you get through enough tiers). But enough about that; let us take you through some of that juicy *free* content added since launch.

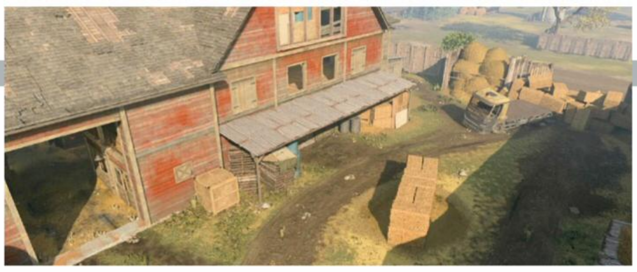
INFO

PUB ACTIVISION
DEV INFINITY WARD
PLAYERS 2-20 (STANDARD MULTIPLAYER), 64 (GROUND WAR), 150 (WARZONE)
REVIEW #169, 8/10
MODES TEAM DEATHMATCH, GUNFIGHT, WARZONE, KILL CONFIRMED, SEARCH & DESTROY, INFECTED, CYBER ATTACK, GROUND WAR, HARDPOINT, DOMINATION, CAPTURE THE FLAG, HEADQUARTERS, FREE FOR ALL, DEMOLITION

Season five is now under way. If you purchase the Battle Pass, one of the instant rewards is new operator Lerch. There's then a new finishing move to unlock, where you summon a crow to peck your enemy to death. Caw blimey!

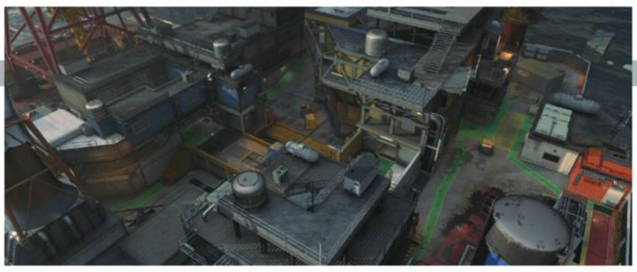
Map hysteria

A small selection of the maps added since launch



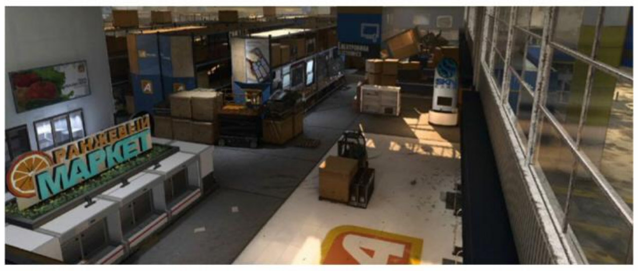
LIVESTOCK

This season-five addition for Gunfight is a great idea. A barn with a small perimeter, it's a small space crammed full of opportunities for ambushes, sniping, cover, and quick escapes. No chance to sleep on the job here.



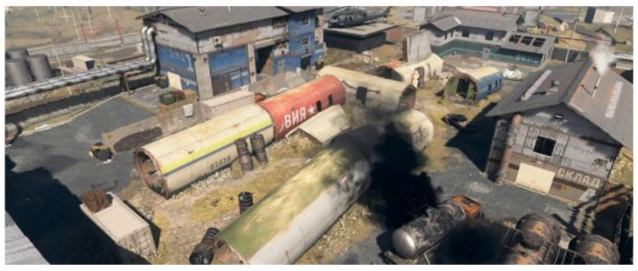
PETROV OIL RIG

Also introduced in season five, this is a rabbit warren of tight corridors connected by open spaces and higher platforms. Perhaps the most difficult map to learn due to its intricacy, it's easy to be taken by surprise here.



ATLAS SUPERSTORE

Season two brought in this map which, despite the name, is more of a warehouse than a shop. Plenty of corners to watch. Be aware of the skylights – aerial killstreaks can still get you inside if you're not being careful!



SCRAPYARD

This remake of the Modern Warfare 2 map, brought in as part of season four, should engorge your nostalgia gland. Despite some subtle tweaks it's virtually identical to the original, so watch for snipers and campers.

Head(shot) in the game

A few of our favourite post-launch unlockable weapons

ISO SMG

The blisteringly fast rate of fire cuts down enemies at close quarters almost immediately, and gobbles up ammo at an alarming rate. Craft your loadout to increase damage range and ammo capacity, and you'll have a formidable weapon on your hands.

RENETTI PISTOL

Unremarkable at first, the main draw of the Renetti is the three-round burst fire mod that can be unlocked. Low recoil means it can be effective at almost any range, though it's a gun that demands – and rewards – accuracy.

CROSSBOW

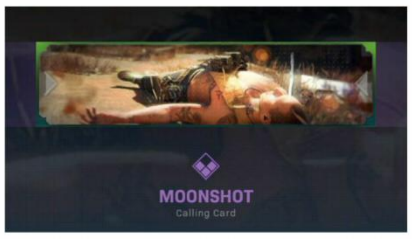
It reloads at a glacial pace until you unlock Sleight Of Hand, but stick with it. It's a great weapon to show off with, and the gas, thermite, and explosive bolts you'll eventually unlock open up a new world of opportunities.

KALI STICKS

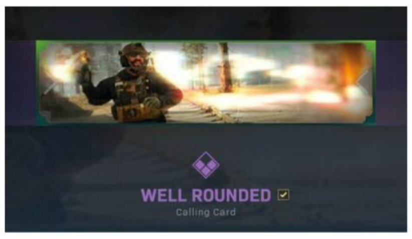
The Kali sticks require two hits for a kill. This fact alone makes it a bit of a cheeky humiliation weapon, and who can resist that? The *click-clack* sound it makes when you're whacking an enemy to death is extremely satisfying too.

Up to the challenge

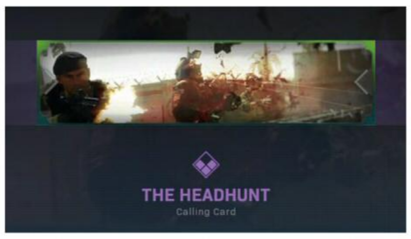
Want a calling card with major bragging rights attached? Look no further



1 If you're looking for a weapon to impress people with, it's hard to think of a better choice than the throwing knife. Get a kill from 50 metres away and you can equip this to make foes fume with envy.



2 The easiest Mastery Challenge, you nab this by scoring a kill with six different types of lethal equipment in one match. Bounce between loadouts in a small map such as Vacant or Shipment to get it.



3 From the simplest Mastery Challenge to the most difficult. You need to get ten headshots in one life to rock this calling card. Your best bet is probably to find a good sniping spot in Euphrates Bridge.

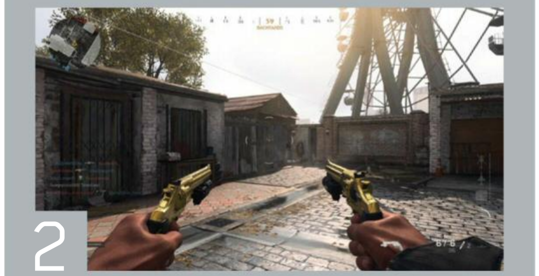
3 Things you need to know *now*

There's vital info in these high-calibre bullet points

1

AGENTS OF SHIELD

Impervious to bullets and most explosives, the riot shield's great for tackling campers. Sticking thermite or Semtex to a shield remains a perfect counter. Explosive crossbow bolts are another option.



2

TWICE AS NICE

Akimbo has been added as an unlockable perk for pistols. While it puts you at a disadvantage in long-range firefights, it makes you deadly up close, and rocking two guns at once will always be cool.

HOSPITAL
TRAIN STATION
PROMENADE WEST
ESPLANADE

3

IN THE ZONE

Warzone, COD's take on battle royale, has proved explosively popular. Season five sees the addition of Mini Royale, a faster-paced version with shorter matches and a higher rate of enemy encounters.

The know-how

Questions, answered

Q: Have they added map voting yet?
A: Nope. Looks like they never will.

Q: Surely One In The Chamber is present now?
A: The best COD mode ever, right? The one with one-hit kills where everybody starts with a pistol and one bullet, and kills replenish your ammo? It was rotated in briefly, but then left again. Bonkers.

Q: Do people still bounce up and down at the start of a match in greeting?
A: Not as much as they used to. We miss it.

Q: Is the game still full of campers?
A: Things are much better now. Although the behaviour is encouraged by the baffling decision to include the mounting mechanic, campers are rare, and often easily dealt with.

on the store

EMPTY YOUR WALLETS NOW WITH THE LATEST DOWNLOADABLE DIVERSIONS

EXPANSION

Now you're not the only samurai left standing on Tsushima.

FREE

Ghost Of Tsushima: Legends

Four mythical samurai for the price of one – bargain!

Call us a fortune-telling lucky cat, because as soon as we held down L2 so Jin could revive an ally in the campaign we thought, "this seems like something you'd do in a co-op multiplayer game". The prediction comes to pass as this free DLC adds two- to four-player action this autumn.

Legends is a self-contained mode filled with elements based on folktales and myths. For two players, buddy-samurai story missions await. These increase in difficulty as you progress, and require good working knowledge of the combat system, working with new skills with "magical twists", according to Sucker Punch.

For four players, the action's based on wave-based survival missions involving stronger enemies than we've seen before, including oni demons. Legends will have a Raid (due after release) that sends a team of four to a new realm to tackle an extra-challenging foe.

The structure suggests Legends will be updated post-launch, turning one of this year's best single-player adventures into a potential multiplayer mainstay. It's a smart move. That said, the suggestion of future support combined with PS5's imminent launch makes us wonder if Ghost Of Tsushima will be enhanced beyond simple back compatibility in the near future.

> A RAID WILL SEND A TEAM OF FOUR TO A NEW REALM TO TACKLE AN EXTRA-CHALLENGING FOE.

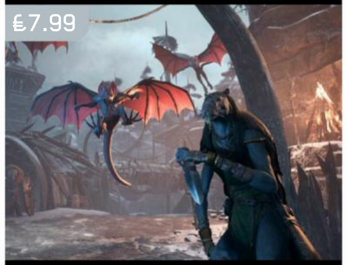
DLC

£11.69

LINKIN PARK
MUSIC PACK

BEAT SABER – LINKIN PARK MUSIC PACK

It starts with one thing – or rather, 11: that's the number of jams included in this PS VR rhythm game song pack. It doesn't matter how hard you try, Beat Saber *will* push you one step closer to the edge (just like before).



£7.99

REMNANT: FROM THE ASHES – SUBJECT 2923

The final piece of DLC for Remnant is the biggest yet, continuing the strange and surreal story of the base game. Travel to Ward Prime and other new locations to uncover the truth behind The Dreamers and their connection to The Root.

£11.99

BORDERLANDS 3 – PSYCHO KRIEG AND THE FANTASTIC FUSTERCLUCK

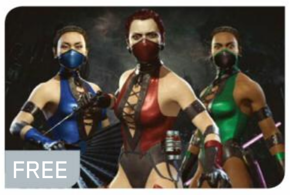
We've reached the end of BL3's expansion DLCs (for now), and this might be the strangest. Journey inside the mind of Psycho Krieg to learn more about the mythical Vaulthalla, the source of his madness, in this trippy dreamscape.

ALSO ON PSN

FREE

MEGA MAN ZERO/ZX LEGACY COLLECTION – REPLOID REMIXES

Veteran composers provide six alternative in-game tracks and four special arrangements in the Music Player.



FREE

MORTAL KOMBAT 11 – KLASSIC FEMME FATALE PACK

Jade, Skarlet, and Kitana don these Mortal Kombat 3-inspired outfits to show they're not messing around. Femme fatality!

TBC

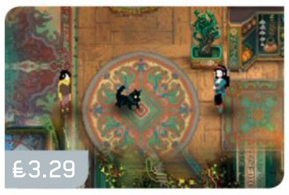
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS XIV – LEGEND OF THE GALACTIC HEROES

This odd crossover adds a scenario and characters based on the politicking space age anime.

TBC

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – SHADOWS OF NEW YORK

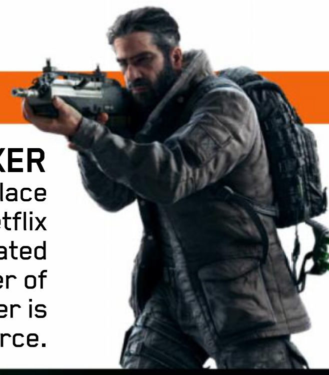
A standalone expansion to Coteries Of New York following a member of the Lasombra clan.



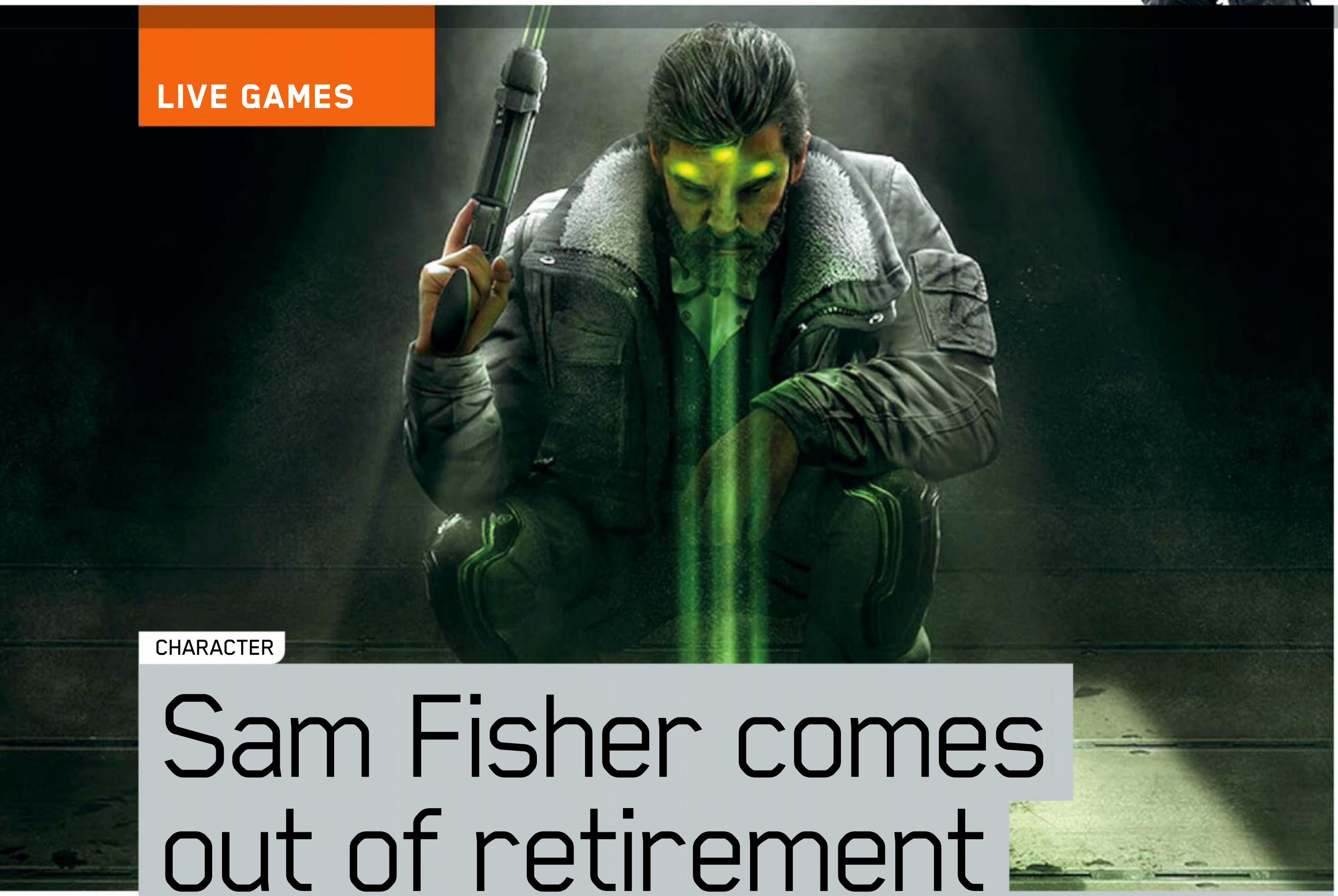
£3.29

CHILDREN OF MORTA – PAWS AND CLAWS

100% of the profit from this DLC, which adds an Animal Shelter System and lots of critters, goes to the Humane Society International charity.



SAM FLIXER
Rainbow Six Siege isn't the only place Sam Fisher is *splintering* off into. Netflix has also commissioned an animated series from Derek Kolstad, the writer of John Wick. It makes sense, as Fisher is also an unstoppable force.



CHARACTER

Sam Fisher comes out of retirement

Back for RSS – Operation Shadow Legacy

Sure, it's not a brand new Splinter Cell, but Sam Fisher's recent inclusion as a crossover Operator in Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege was a great outing for the grizzled spy (he's now pushing into his 60s).

Fisher joined the squad under the codename Zero as Rainbow Operation Staff, packing the powerful SC3000K assault rifle. His gadget added a distinctly spy-tinged twist, as he's capable of shooting four spy cameras that can drill through walls, stick to them, and fire a shock dart. Fisher can aid with map knowledge, and respond to upcoming defender team traps.

He was joined by a reworking of the Chalet map, which felt tighter than the original. Operation Shadow Legacy also introduced Ping 2.0, adding number coding and contextual pings. The update introduced many other solid quality-of-life improvements, Ubisoft shoring up Rainbow Six Siege for a new generation of players. With Fisher on board, you can't go wrong.

> “FISHER JOINED THE SQUAD UNDER THE CODENAME ZERO AS RAINBOW OPERATION STAFF.”

SEASON

FORTNITE – NEXUS WAR

While we waited for Marvel's Avengers to launch, Fortnite swept in a week ahead of it to feed our hunger for all things superheroic. The Island collided with the Marvelverse, falling under threat of Galactus. Cue Marvel-inspired locations, Stark weaponry, and a deluge of superpowers to use. Completing special hero and villain challenges allowed us to collect outfits based on our favourites, such as Storm, Iron Man and Thor. Wolverine was toughest to earn.

EVENT

FINAL FANTASY XIV – GATHER ONE, GATHER ALL!

Mixed media franchise Yo-kai Watch returned to Eorzea in this frankly massive crossover. Obtaining our own Yo-kai Watch from a chap in Ul'dah, we had to track down the cute folkloric creatures, earning up to 17 of them as Minions (and weapon variants). Little Noko was just adorable. Plus, the Whisper-Go mount came back, allowing us to ghost ride the… er… ghost.

DUNGEON

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE – STONETHORN

The Dark Heart Of Skyrim storyline got its penultimate update in the form of Stonethorn, a double dose of four-player dungeoning for ESO Plus members (also purchasable from the Crown Store). We dove into Castle Thorn to take on Lady Thorn and the vampire army she's been building, and went head-to-head with alchemist Arkasis' monstrosities in Blackreach's Stone Garden. For entering both we got the Energetic Dwarven Shock-Spider pet.

THE MONTH IN… EVENTS

@MrOscarTK

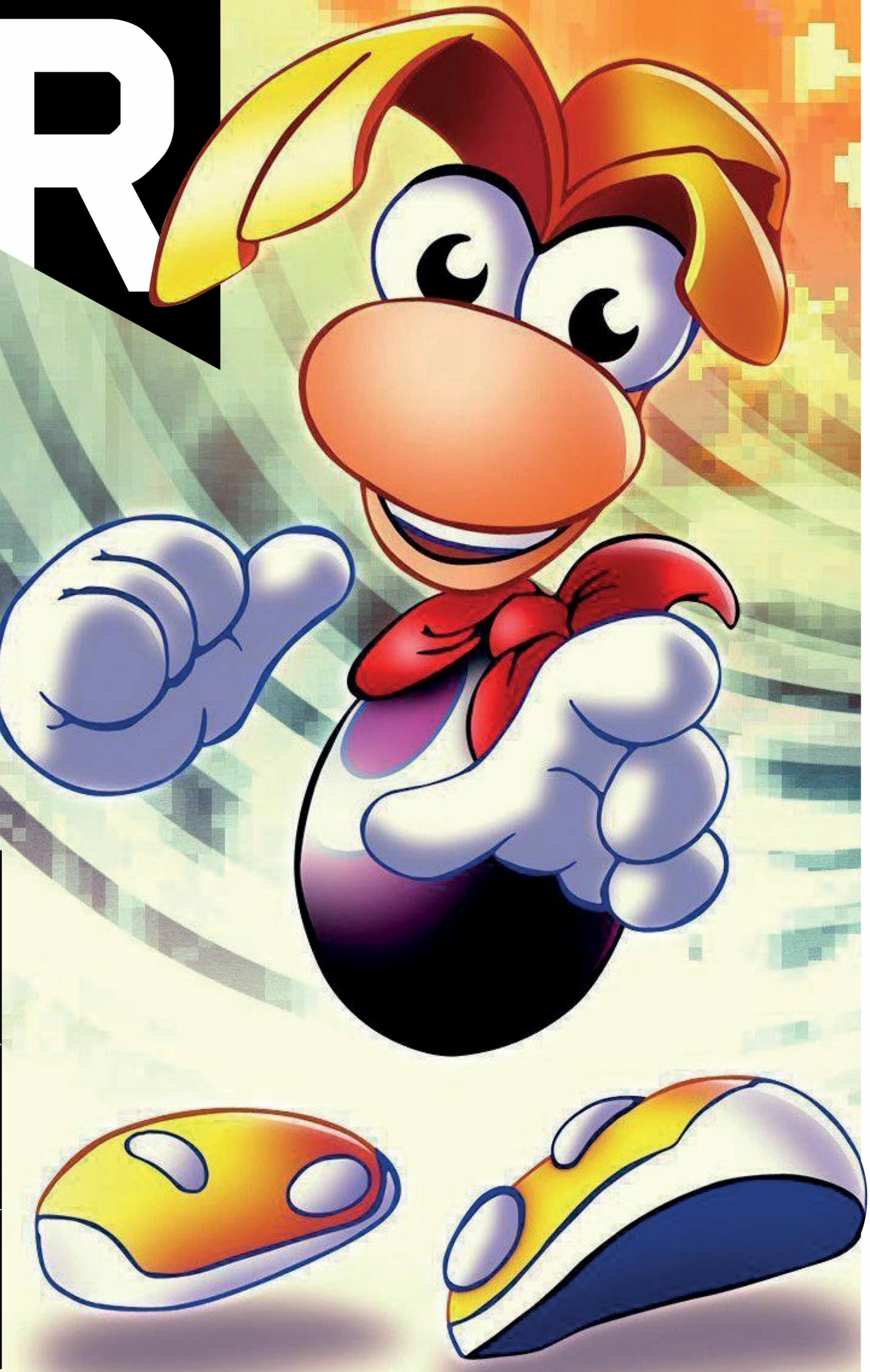
Online games can feel like communities, and there's nothing that makes you feel more in tune with one than when you all come together over something special. Take CALL OF DUTY: WARZONE's reveal of Black Ops – Cold War…

It's debatable when these first online events started, though **FORTNITE** has made it mainstream – remember when Fortnite's Chapter 1 ended and the game voided out of existence for a while?

WARZONE, Activision's COD-brand battle royale, has become a must-play for fans. Having everyone together, constantly playing online, allowed the publisher to have fun with the reveal. Players had to collect map codes to find redacted information, while video footage from the Cold War teaser played over the screen, getting more over-the-top as they progressed and culminating in a full trailer once they reached the stadium.

Involving fans directly with the reveal is the kind of thing only a series like Call Of Duty, which has a series of main games beside Warzone, could do. Single-player isn't going the way of the dodo, but coming together online to share excitement for its reveal adds to the experience.

R



For decades, people have marvelled over what Rayman is – a human with invisible arms, bitten by a radioactive aubergine?

RAYMAN
Ubi Soft

INFO

PUB UBISOFT
DEV UBISOFT PRODUCTIONS
RELEASED 1995
GET IT NOW PRELOADED ON THE PLAYSTATION CLASSIC CONSOLE (£70)

NEED TO KNOW

1 Designer Michel Ancel was behind Beyond Good & Evil.
2 Rayman Junior (2000) teaches maths and spelling.
3 In the UK, Rayman is the bestselling PS1 game.

The hills have eyes

Every month we celebrate the most important, innovative, or just plain great games from PlayStation's past. This month, swing your telescopic fist and get your hair propeller ready to save some caged Electoons

CLASSIC GAME C

Rayman

"Hi folks! You wanna know what's going on? Let me tell you the story of Rayman!" Name a more iconic intro. Go on, we'll wait. A jump'n'run created by Ubisoft as an answer to a certain moustached plumber, Rayman is literally a child's drawing come to life. This childhood fantasy evolved into a brand, due to its distinctive humour and look.

The story goes that Ubisoft took an interest in Rayman thanks to him being particularly well animated – and that interest was substantial, seeing as Ubisoft founded an entire studio, Ubisoft Montpellier in France, to focus on the game. The animation and overall cartoonish charm became the staple of a whole Rayman franchise, which has since produced great games such as Rayman Legends, but it's important to remember that back in 1995 you could confidently say there was nothing out there like it.

Among all gaming genres, platformers in particular have always pushed the envelope. On the kind of enemies you could encounter, new, fun ways you could get around, and especially on visuals, Rayman just ran with the most outlandish designs. You fight giant maracas and saxophones with scowling eyes in Band Land. There's a bright green alien running a snack bar and an island entirely made out of pencils and rubbers. Everything has googly eyes. It's exactly the kind of thing a child would come up with, cheerfully liberated of all constraints. This approach is especially valuable with 25 years of hindsight – these days Triple-A publishers, Ubisoft among them, have started playing it increasingly safe for the sake of the mythical target audience.

NOT CHILD'S PLAY

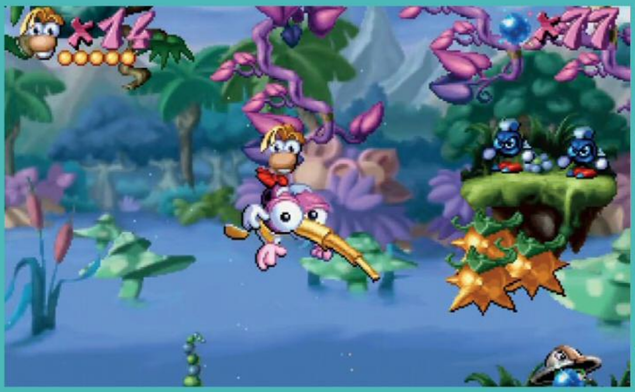
Looking at it, you might assume that Rayman is primarily aimed at children, but the rock-hard difficulty casts doubt on that particular theory. Rayman *is* difficult, but it's in that particular way many platformers were notable for in the '90s. To beat the game, you have to memorise its patterns down to a T. Even then it only takes a missed hitbox or an ill-timed jump to savagely set you back. Fiends don't just exist as obstacles to get around, but look and behave like actual enemies with an intent to hurt, cartoon villains that snap and shoot at you frequently. Rayman likes to gleefully bully its title character, which makes overcoming its many hurdles all the sweeter. It's a mean game in a cute package.

> IT ONLY TAKES A MISSED HITBOX OR AN ILL-TIMED JUMP TO SET YOU BACK.

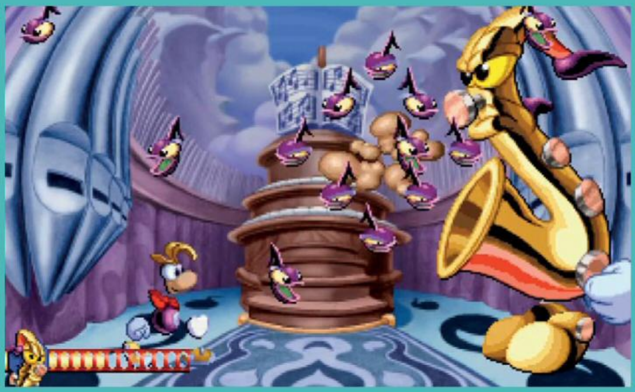
SIDESCROLLER SUPREME

Even beyond the great animations and the purely visual aspects of level design, Rayman is very well produced. It has excellent sound effects for each jump and incoming projectile, and the soundtrack beautifully showcases a range of genres. It's not all just left-to-right side-scrolling either – the vertical level with a rising flood became so iconic later games in the series reused the concept. Rayman tried to make you use the pattern recognition that leads to success against its bosses in navigating its levels, too, often asking you to take wild leaps of faith in order to find a platform or to even cause one to appear out of nowhere. This experimentation with platforms is likely due to the game's other systems being pretty simple. Rayman is one of few jump'n'run protagonists of the era who has the ability to outright hit his foes – together with his telescopic arm this a neat way to solve some environmental puzzles.

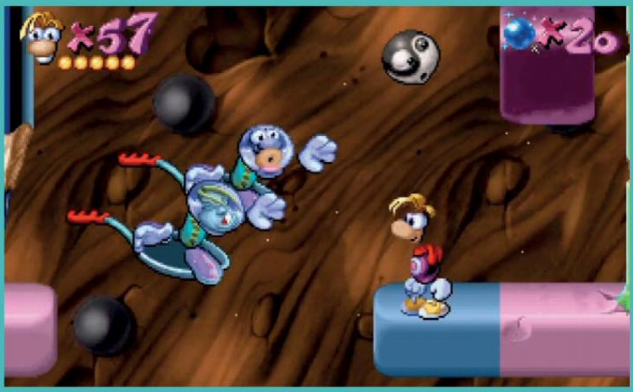
Essentially however, Rayman isn't one for genre-breaking experiments. It's familiar, the spirited and cheeky alternative to the first earnest, and in some ways slightly dry, games of its ilk. But like all the best games, it never took itself too seriously.



Rayman's enemies can turn into friends.



There's a joke in here about Mr Sax's thrusting.



It's fair to say not every enemy design aged well.

Name that game

Guess the four games, and their scores, from these review quotes

1

"EXAMINING THE FINAL DAYS OF A HANDFUL OF NORMAL PEOPLE WITH NO CYNICISM."

2

"WITH A PAIR OF PS MOVE CONTROLLERS YOU LITERALLY DO HAVE TO COPY YOUR OPPONENTS' DANCE MOVES."

3

"THERE ARE FEW WORDS ADEQUATE TO DESCRIBE EXACTLY HOW JOYOUS YOU'LL FEEL AS YOU DON THE BATSUIT PIECE BY PIECE, TRYING ITS TOOLS FOR SIZE."

4

"AT ITS CORE [...] WILL MAKE EVEN THE MOST UNCO-ORDINATED PLAYER FEEL LIKE A BADASS WITH TWO INCANDESCENT RAPIERS."

ANSWERS
1. Everybody's Gone To The Rapture, issue #114, 8/10.
2. Space Channel 5 VR: Kinda Funky News Flash, issue #174, 6/10.
3. Batman: Arkham VR #129, 8/10.
4. Beat Saber, issue #157, 8/10.

PS4 | PS3 | PS VITA
PlayStation Official Magazine - UK
20th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL
A to Z of FALLOUT 4
The ultimate guide to 2015's Wasteland
WORLD EXCLUSIVE
UNCHARTED 4
Naughty Dog on the script that moved the team to tears, new set-pieces and The Last Of Us 2
WE'RE #1 FOR...
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
Plus four Star Wars remasters you'll be playing this Christmas
ATTACK ON TITAN COMES TO PS4
20 WORST MOMENTS OF PLAYSTATION
YOUR FAVOURITE MEMORIES FROM PLAYSTATION'S PAST
WHY WWE 2K16 WILL GIVE EVERY OTHER SPORTS GAME AN RKO
TEARAWAY UNFOLDED, MAD MAX, ZOMBI & PES 2016 REVIEWED

OPM TIME MACHINE

5 YEARS AGO

One of PlayStation's all-time heroes landed on the cover of **OPM #115** as the devs revealed how they made the magic

UNCHARTED 4

UNCHARTED 4

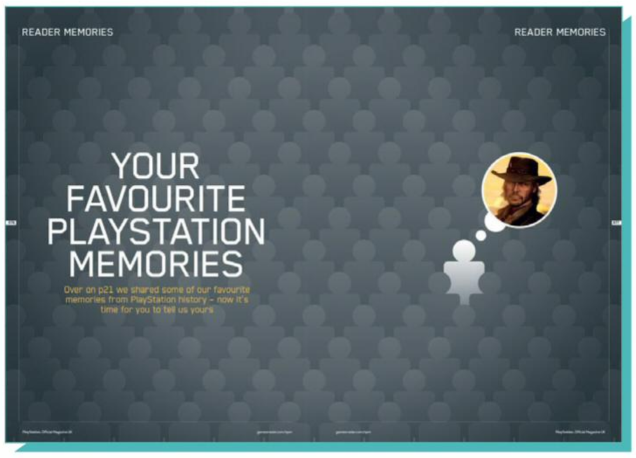
THIEF ENCOUNTERS

On 18 March 2016, **Uncharted 4: A Thief's End** will finally hit PS4. Matthew Pellett tracks down creative director Neil Druckmann and writer Josh Scherr to find out why Nathan Drake's final outing will change the gaming landscape forever

Above Neil Druckmann told us the philosophy behind Uncharted: "How do we make you feel like you're inside a summer blockbuster?" Without paying us millions and giving us our own luxury trailer with a star on the door, Uncharted 4's as close as it gets.

Below left From 'that new console smell' to fab gifts, you shared your fondest PlayStation memories.

Below right And we reminded you of all the things you'd rather forget, like PS3's Yellow Light Of Death.


READER MEMORIES

READER MEMORIES

YOUR FAVOURITE PLAYSTATION MEMORIES

Over on p21 we shared some of our favourite memories from PlayStation history – now it's time for you to tell us yours

WORST MOMENTS

THE 20 WORST MOMENTS IN PLAYSTATION HISTORY

We all made mistakes before we turned 20. OPM looks back on the less fond PlayStation memories that we'd all rather forget

01 SERIOUSLY HACKED OFF

02 GIANT CRAB ON THE MENU AT E3

03 WHEN SONY WENT BANANAS

04 RIP WIPEOUT

DON'T MAKE ME READ!

OPSM #1

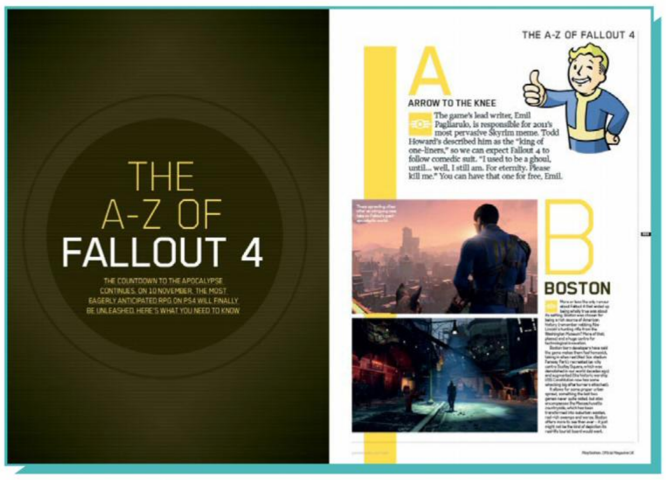
To celebrate the 20th anniversary of PS1 in the UK, OPSM #1's launch editor revisits the issue that started it all

WHO?

INFO

WHAT?

WHAT WAS I DOING WITH THE COLUMNS? THIS WAS NOT MY FINEST HOUR.


THE A-Z OF FALLOUT 4

THE COUNTDOWN TO THE APOCALYPSE CONTINUES. ON 10 NOVEMBER, THE MOST EAGERLY ANTICIPATED RPG ON PS4 WILL FINALLY BE UNLEASHED. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

THE A-Z OF FALLOUT 4

A ARROW TO THE KNEE

The game's lead writer, Emil Pagliarulo, is responsible for 2011's most pervasive Skyrim meme. Todd Howard's described him as the "king of one-liners," so we can expect Fallout 4 to follow comedic suit. "I used to be a ghoul, until... well, I still am. For eternity. Please kill me." You can have that one for free, Emil.

B BOSTON

Far left We made our very first editor reread our very first issue, from 1995. 'Tomb Raiders'? Bet that never caught on.

Left From 'arrow to the knee' to 'zero hour', we took you through Fallout's alphabet. You could call it a SPECIAL feature.

DON'T MAKE ME PLAY!

FAR CRY 3 CLASSIC EDITION

Don't like it. Never tried it. Every month we force one of our team to play their most feared game

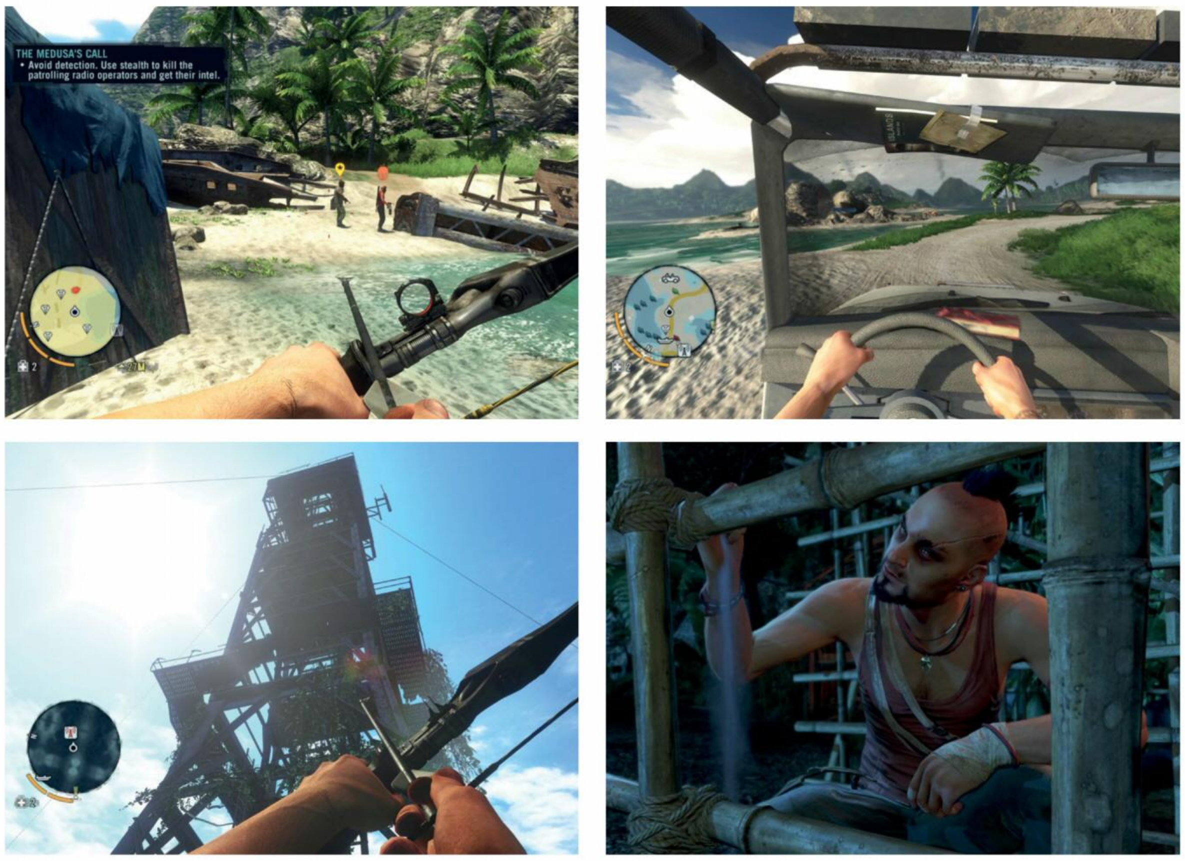
PS3
FARCRY3
18
www.pegi.info
PROVISORISCH
UBISOFT

INFO

PUB UBISOFT
DEV UBISOFT MONTREAL
RELEASED 2018, PS4 (2012, PS3)
GET IT NOW PSN, £24.99

WHAT?

Arguably the game that laid the template for Ubisoft's camps-and-towers open world approach. You're on a jungle island, and have to save your kidnapped friends from the dangerous yet charismatic pirate, Vaas.


THE MEDUSA'S CALL
• Avoid detection. Use stealth to kill the patrolling radio operators and get their intel.

The island is fairly open for you to explore from the very beginning, giving you a surprising amount of freedom to progression (even if it can be a little tiresome at times).

WHO?

Assassin's Creed lover Oscar Taylor-Kent was studying the hidden blade while the rest of us were studying the gun, so he's being sent on his first trip into Far Cry's muddy world.

Vaas, Vaas, Vaas. The antagonist is all Far Cry 3 fans go on about. And, minutes in, I'm furious because they're right. Michael Mando's scenery-chewing performance as the evil pirate is electric, proving that good character acting is one of videogames' most underrated necessities.

But it's too bad I quickly escape his clutches, thrown into Rook Islands as annoying rich kid Jason Brody whose vacation with his friends has gone horribly wrong. Vaas is a murdering monster, sure, but I can't help loathing Jason for his meekness combined with his absurdly good combat skills from the off. Even without any of the laboriously crafted upgrades (you have to hunt specific animals just to be able to hold two guns at once), he's a machine who can stealth kill entire outposts with ease. Though maybe it's just because I'm good at the game? It's hard not to be, as the camp-clearing, tower-finding, resource-scavenging gameplay that might have felt fresh at the time is now standard in so many games – and all pretty basic here.

> MICHAEL MANDO'S PERFORMANCE AS THE EVIL PIRATE IS ELECTRIC.

I can't help but love that simplicity at times. It sometimes feels nicely analogue as you manually tag individual enemies, or fight with the aged cars on the bumpy roads. But most missions feel the same. Go here, clear enemies, find more of the map, then go to the next symbol-packed area. As Vaas himself reminds us: "Insanity is doing the exact… same [blorp!]ing thing… over and over again expecting… [blorp!] to change… That. Is. Crazy." Eight years on, we're still doing the same checklist missions in open world games? Maybe Vaas can teach us something (possibly that character performances are better than countless map icons), but I'll be taking his advice and moving on.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT-GEN'S GREATEST GAMES

PS4 HALL OF FAME

1

UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

Nathan Drake's swan song is a daring evolution. It combines series-defining set-pieces, quietly devastating storytelling beats, and sprawling levels that make you feel like a real-life explorer. This franchise finale retains its signature charm, with the wisecracks firing as fast as the bullets, while the new characters each justify their inclusion. With an astonishing attention to detail, it's Naughty Dog's best yet.

2

RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

There are a lot of open world games, but none that make you feel like you're a part of a world in quite the same way as Arthur Morgan's wild west adventure. Tremendously physical, an epic story, and some of the most satisfying headshots you'll ever find.

3

GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than a mere HD remaster. Upped to a glorious 1080p, it weaves everything that made the PS3 original great, with new music, more dynamic weather, and a game-changing FPS mode.

4

FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

It feels like the game you remember from PS1, and that's Square's greatest achievement. Everything is dragged up to date, from the combat to the visuals. This remake even manages a late-game twist that could reset the franchise. Brave, bold, essential.

5

GOD OF WAR

A departure in some ways but a resounding return in others, Kratos is back with a son *and* a ruddy big axe. Taking the legend from Greek to Norse mythology, this entry brings a lot to the table while improving on what was core to the earlier series' identity.

6

THE LAST OF US PART II

Arguably the original is holistically better but there are few games that push PS4 to its limits as this sequel does. With near photoreal visuals, emotional twists that land, and enough new ideas to ensure you're always thinking, this is a slick followup.

7

DREAMS

This is a feature-laden platform of artistic tools that enables you to create everything from characters, elements, and scenes to entire games, and resets what a console 'game' should be and do. Dreams should be installed on every PS4.

8

THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

The White Wolf's epic journey is an RPG experience like no other on PS4. It's been made even more spectacular with this gigantic pack stuffed with DLC, making it a must-have part of any gaming library.

9

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

A beautiful open world where every Greek island tells a unique story. AC Odyssey is a epic in the truest sense, with lively writing, mythical beasts to battle, and a poignant Assassin's Creed story that lays the bed for all the lore to come. A brilliant spectacle.

10

HORIZON ZERO DAWN

A staggeringly large world that condenses cracking combat, accessible systems, and uncut eye-candy into an action RPG that will please anyone. In Aloy, PlayStation might just have a new icon. Come for the robo-fights, stay for the exquisitely dense mythology.

11

MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

Borrowing heavily from Rocksteady's Batman series, this delivers the heart and soul of Marvel's superhero. It ticks every box you could ask for: perfect web-swinging, a powerful story, a roster of classic villains, and all of New York to defend.

12

PERSONA 5 ROYAL

The most stylish JRPG ever made finds its definitive form in expanded release Royal. It combines dark and moving teen angst with unforgettable friendships that power you up in the heart-invading dungeons, and sets a genre gold standard.

13

SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

FromSoftware's latest adventure repackages its unflinchingly difficult combat into a fantastical take on feudal Japan. More accessible than Bloodborne but layered with equally clever and subtle ideas, this is director Hidetaka Miyazaki's best yet.

14

BLOODBORNE

With the finest third-person melee combat in gaming, drool-worthy art design and the most twisted monsters imaginable, this is a gorgeously gothic must-have. The Old Hunters expansion adds enough nightmare fuel to make a return to Yharnam essential.

15

MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

Presenting a vibrant open world, light on story but heavy on action, this is the most accessible entry in the series yet. Perfecting the feel-good grind through its complex systems and pitch-perfect multiplayer, it's a PS4 must-play.

16

RESIDENT EVIL 2

RESIDENT EVIL 2

Powered by the RE Engine, this remake is more than a classic game with a facelift. New Tyrant and zombie AI adds tension, and fresh areas not seen in the original PS1 classic update the core gameplay making this Resi 2 a celebration of PS1 *and* PS4.

17

HITMAN 2

Agent 47 sneaks his way into the ultimate PS4 stealth-'em-up. With a fantastic set of new maps, it also plays host to legacy content for all the missions in the first game, making it the new de facto Hitman hub. No stealth game is more satisfying.

18

CONTROL

Running, gunning, flying, flinging – this one has it all. Satisfying gunplay plus a slew of telekinetic powers make a winning combination as you explore one of the most compelling settings on PS4 to date, the Oldest House. (New) weird and absolutely wonderful.

19

DAYS GONE

A beautiful, epic story told at its own pace, Days Gone is a modern western played out across a society that's *just* crumbled. The challenge of the hordes and the emotional clout of the narrative manage to push above the cookie-cutter ideas.

20

DEVIL MAY CRY 5

Another classic PlayStation series returns to form on PS4. Slicing up demons and doing so stylishly has never felt better, especially when each of the three characters (Nero, Dante, and V) plays so uniquely. It looks stunning, and plays even better.

21

RESIDENT EVIL

RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Capcom's greatest series returns to terrifying form thanks to a trip to Louisiana to meet the Baker family, who stalk you around their mansion. While the second half of the game doesn't match the intensity of the first, this is still essential for any horror fan.

22

DISHONORED2

DISHONORED 2

The follow-up to a PS3 great, mixing a creative skillset with impressive level design to create a Kaldwin-ning immersive sim. From the shifting rooms of The Clockwork Mansion to learning to link your powers, there's so much scope for experimenting.

23

THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

This modern masterpiece just gets stronger with age, like a full-bodied stilton. A brutal, emotionally honest take on the end of the world, Naughty Dog's stealth shooter is simply one of the best games ever, even if this PS4 port doesn't add much to it.

24

METRO EXODUS

Larger but maintaining an emphasis on storytelling and experimentation, this sequel to Last Light pulls no punches. If you're looking for one of the best narrative-led shooters on PS4 this mix of FPS, horror, stealth, and survival shouldn't be ignored.

25

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Bluepoint completely overhauls the visuals of Team Ico's masterpiece but still manages to match the original step-for-step in its remake. New controls and a beautiful photo mode add to the package. Wander's tragic quest has never looked or played better.

BUBBLING UNDER

Alternative picks

We mine the library for gold. This month: crossovers – twice the fun!

PICK #1

DEAD OR ALIVE 6

DEAD OR ALIVE 6

Jess Kinghorn feels quenched

The Shin Megami Tensei: Lucifer's Call remaster isn't out yet, so you get this thirst-trap crossover instead. The sixth DOA crosses over multiple series and unifies them under the same, ahem, appealing art style. With new faces plus fighters from other series, it's got a ro-bust roster. Mai Shiranui was rejected from one crossover series catering to "good girls and boys" but here she fits right in… which tells you all you need to know.

PICK #2

SHADOWBRINGERS

FINAL FANTASY XIV: SHADOWBRINGERS

Oscar Taylor-Kent wants to get Nier to you

As a seven-year-old MMO, FFXIV has had plenty of great crossovers, from Final Fantasy XII to Monster Hunter. My favourite has to be the YoRHa: Dark Apocalypse raid series that crosses over with Nier: Automata. It's fun to get stuck into really inventive robot fights that use mechanics from Nier, and great to soak in some Yoko-Taro-created lore within my favourite MMO.

> “IT'S GREAT TO SOAK IN SOME YOKO-TARO-CREATED LORE WITHIN MY FAVOURITE MMO.”

PICK #3

GHOST RECON

GHOST RECON WILDLANDS

Ian Dean enjoys Ubisoft's endless tease

Not only did Sam Fisher drop into Ghost Recon Wildlands, he brought a whole roster of stealth-focussed missions with him. The tease continued. Ubisoft actually went to effort of bringing back Michael Ironside to the role of Fisher. The devs wouldn't do *that* unless there was a new Splinter Cell in the works, would they? This crossover was Ubisoft flexing its bank balance and connections to tickle our expectations. Great fun.

An aged and bearded Sam FIsher guest-starred in Wildlands, and gave us a glimpse of where Ubisoft could take Splinter Cell.

THE VIRTUAL REALITY HITS YOU HAVE TO PLAY

PS VR HALL OF FAME

1

TETRIS EFFECT

Tetris, yeah? It might be a great game, but it's easy to understand why you'd brush this off as just more Tetris at a glance. Yet Tetsuya Mizuguchi's trippy, transcendent take on the block-based puzzler is nothing short of a masterpiece. Sure, you can play it without PS VR, but in the virtual space it really becomes next level, transforming one of the tightest puzzle games ever made into an emotional ride.

2

THE PERSISTENCE

This first-person horror roguelike offers perfectly sized chunks of survival bursts. It's everything you'd expect from a full PS4 release, but in PS VR it's filled with clever ideas, unique weapons, genuine jump scares, and fab looks – plus great couchplay.

3

REZ INFINITE

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's vision becomes reality in PS VR. This psychedelic rhythm rail shooter has achieved its final form. Its crowning achievement? New level Area X; it's powerful enough to bring players to tears. Worthy of its name, this is a timeless title.

4

THUMPER

Make no mistake: the brave chrome beetle gives Rez a run for its money. Hurtling down a violently kaleidoscopic track, pounding notes and scraping round corners is exquisitely tough – and the manic magic is enhanced and perfected in PS VR.

5

ASTRO BOT RESCUE MISSION

This pint-sized adventure packs charm in spades even if it isn't chock-full of challenge. Bringing the classic puzzle platformer formula bang up to date in PS VR, it won't take many levels before you're calling out, "Beam me up, Botty!"

6

IRON MAN VR

With a finely-crafted control setup that enables flight within small sandbox maps, and option to inhabit the designer shoes of the billionaire playboy too, Iron Man VR is almost a perfect interpretation of the famous Avenger. It's a PS VR must-play.

7

BLOOD & TRUTH

The truth? You can't handle the truth. But if you can, then you'll discover one of PS VR's best shooters, tied to the kind of slick cinematic narrative we're used to from Sony's non-VR releases. Blood & Truth is one of the most complete games for PS VR.

8

KEEP TALKING AND NOBODY EXPLODES

Who knew bombs could bring people *together*? With one headsetted Defuser, and as many Experts as you can fit around a 23-page manual, no other VR game comes close for inclusive, endless multiplayer fun.

9

STATIK

Saw meets Portal in this fantastic puzzler. It makes ingenious use of the DualShock 4 by giving every button a specific function. You'll need to use them all to free your hands from the strange box in which they're trapped. An intriguing concept done well.

10

FIREWALL: ZERO HOUR

There's only one game mode, a cat-and-mouse assault to find and either destroy or protect a laptop, but when the shooting is this laser-focused, who could want more? A PS Aim controller is a must to get the most from PS VR's standout shooter.

11

RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Can you can go eye-to-eye with the Bakers? Playing in VR raises the tension to almost unbearable levels and has gameplay benefits such as face-aiming, which makes shooting a *lot* easier. A brilliant example of how VR can improve already great games.

12

DOOM VFR

A new take on a classic game, this proves first-person shooters can shine in VR. A mix of control choices, including the PS Aim controller, ensures Doom is as fast and fluid in VR as it's ever been. Every PS VR owner needs this in their collection.

13

TO THE TOP

This creative platform-puzzler enables you to scamper, jump, and skate across its 35 sandbox worlds, with the aid of your PS Move controllers. It's as physically demanding as it is perplexing, and all the better for it. To The Top is a PS VR one-off.

14

STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW

Mixes the fanboy fantasy of nestling in the Captain's chair (or taking control of the helm, weapons, or engineering section) on a USS starship with the strongest co-op experience on PS VR. This is Star Trek's finest hour on PlayStation.

15

EVERYBODY'S GOLF VR

Golf and virtual reality go together like ham and eggs or rhubarb and custard. In PS VR you swing and chip shots, lean over putts, and become immersed in the act of putting a ball in a small hole. It's near perfection, and one of PS VR's essentials.

16

SPRINT VECTOR

A crazy mix of SSX racing and obstacle course hijinks, Sprint Vector makes use of the best control setup on PS VR to deliver a near perfect experience. A single-player Challenge mode and online races impress; only the poor single-player AI holds it back.

17

BATMAN: ARKHAM VR

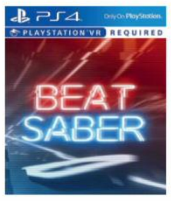
Not only is the training mission an unparalleled exercise in wish fulfilment (Wayne Manor! The Batcave! Batarangs!) but the defiantly sharp, if short, campaign is the epilogue to Arkham Knight we needed and deserved. Bats off to you, Rocksteady.

18

THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM VR

Though compromises have been made to texture detail and controls, you get all of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, including the expansions, inside PS VR. The scale and organic nature of the world at your feet overcomes any shortcomings.

19



BEAT SABER

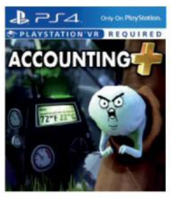
PS VR firmly on and PS Move controllers in hand, Beat Saber feels like the game both pieces of hardware were made for. In it you have to master songs and challenges by swiping your neon swords through the air, and dodging with your head.

20

MOSS

Guide adorable mouse heroine Quill through a fantasy storybook world full of virtual puzzles, fights with insects, and perfectly pitched Disney influences. There's no need to say cheese, because you'll be smiling as you play, all day long.

21



ACCOUNTING +

One of PlayStation's funniest games is a dark, twisted journey into the world of accounting. It's an Inception-like dive into increasingly bizarre and frequently hilarious scenarios that will scratch the itch of any Rick And Morty fan.

22

FARPOINT

This sci-fi shooter is a brilliant showcase for the PS Aim controller, a versatile bit of kit that makes the satisfying range of weapons feel weighty and real. The game matches it, delivering a strong story and challenging co-op for great VR action.

23

KNOCKOUT LEAGUE

Punching things is possibly the least creative use of the VR medium, but when it's used to create a classic arcade boxing sim that plays like a brutal puzzle puncher, it's irresistible. It's also good for you: it tracks your calorie count as you work up a sweat.

24

APEX CONSTRUCT

This story-driven FPS demonstrates five-to-eight hour adventures can work in PS VR. Building its narrative organically through physically exploring the game's world while fending off mechanical creatures with a trusted bow and arrow is a delight. Ambitious.

25

TRANSFERENCE

Come home to these ghosts in the machine. Traipsing through each family member's surreal vision of the apartment they share in first-person horror is a wonderfully dreadful experience. Trespassers will be thoroughly spooked.

PS Now for something completely different

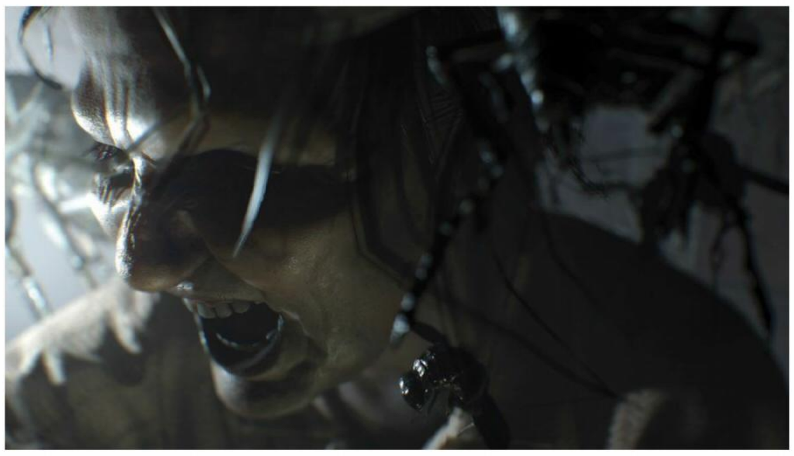
September saw a slew of new titles for Sony's gaming-on-demand service, including horror heavyweight **RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD** (available until 30 Nov) and sci-fi thriller **OBSERVATION**. **FINAL FANTASY XV**, available until March next year, also joined the line-up alongside **WWE 2K19**.

For many of us the start of September is the beginning of spooky season. Diving back into the Baker estate in **RESIDENT EVIL VII** this Halloween is a no-brainer, boasting some of the best first-person scares in the genre. It's an experience enhanced in PS VR and well worth a look-in if you were on the fence before.

From spooky mansions to spooky space, **OBSERVATION** is like a reverse 2001: A Space Odyssey; you take on the unceasing gaze of a space station AI after a mysterious incident has sent your station careening through the void. Dealing in paranoia and puzzles, you may feel more at comfortable as a space oddity than you do as the Bakers' unlucky guest.

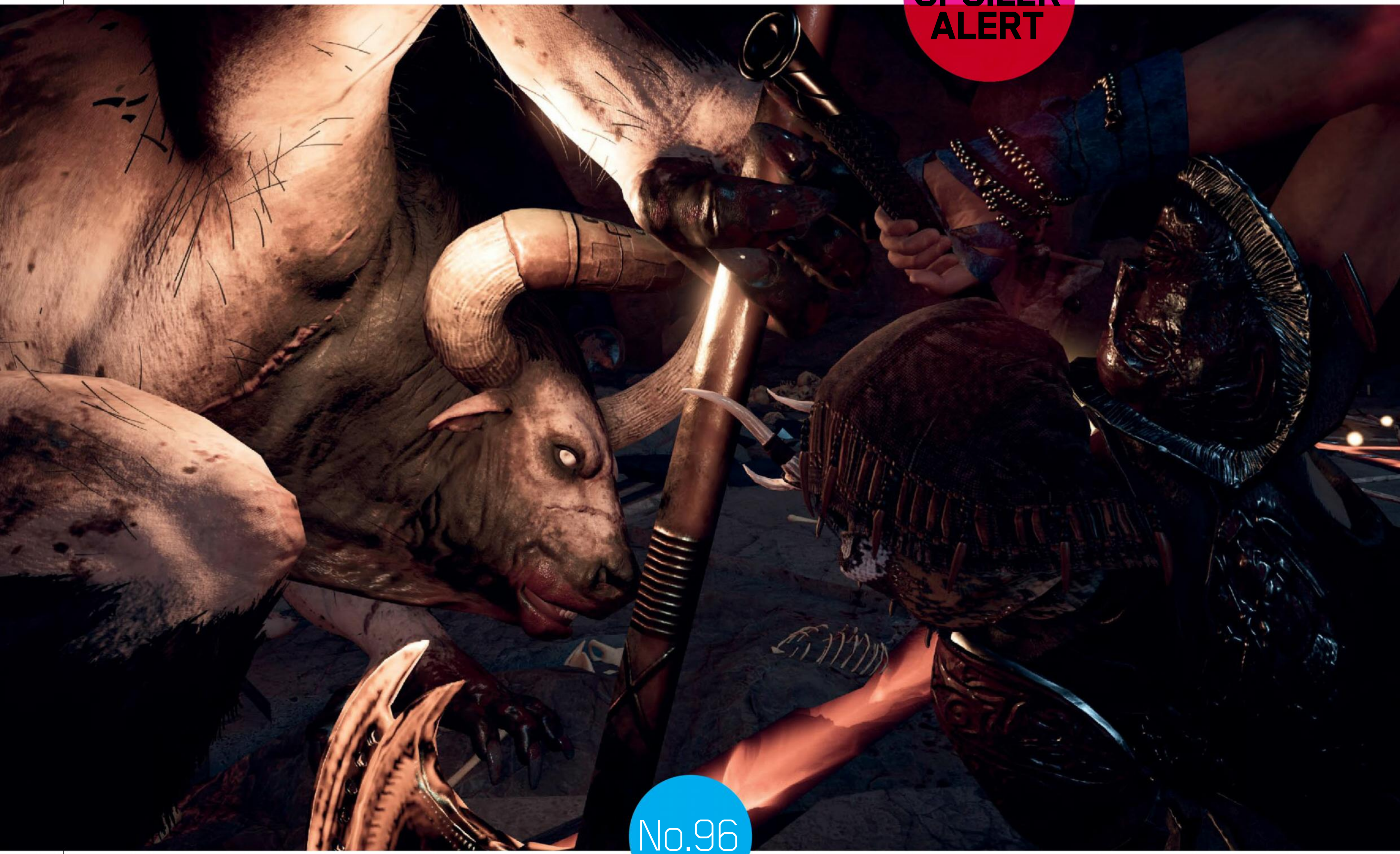
Changing track and hitting the road with the boys, **FINAL FANTASY XV** is a lot less taxing on the nerves. Perhaps one of the most divisive mainline entries to date due to its troubled ten-year development (the decade saw a change of director, change of game engine, redesigned characters and ditching of entire story segments), we thought it was worth praising and gave it 8/10. But if you're a subscriber you can try it before you buy.

Don't worry, we're not returning to a house of horrors; **WWE 2K19** was the final entry developed by Yuke's before Visual Concepts took over for 2K20, the latest and most infamous entry. As this year's 2K was cancelled, this is all wrestling fans have to tide them over beyond the haunting, empty stadium matches we're seeing in real life.



There's a whole lot of Resi on Now but no other mainline games. The absence of Resi 4, in particular, feels like a missed trick.

LOOK AWAY! **SPOILER ALERT**



No.96

A-maze-ing story

Facing a real bully in Assassin's Creed Odyssey

FORMAT PS4 / **PUB** UBISOFT / **DEV** UBISOFT QUEBEC / **RELEASED** 2018 / **SCORE** 9/10

When you land on Krete, a man promises to allow you to fight the minotaur in combat if first you prove yourself at some comically low-budget tasks. Venturing into its lair, you discover it's that very same man in a mediocre disguise. It's one of those great moments of genuine humour and charm. Perhaps the truth behind those myths was just simple con-artistry and a desire to believe in mythology after all?

Well, think again. Not too far from the fake cave lie the ruins of Knossos Palace. A young boy who's looking for his vanished father leads you deep below the rubble to a strange and otherworldly gate that blocks the entrance to the labyrinth. After collecting keys from across the island you return to open the way forward, and are plunged into a truly oppressive maze peppered with pitfalls, having to follow a thread through to find your way. It's an environment tinged with dread that feels alien in a way previous areas haven't, and it's truly unsettling compared to the generic caves of the fake lair.

At the end of the maze, of course, waits the creature you've been seeking. Like no enemy you've faced before, the minotaur is exactly as you'd expect: hulking, dangerous, and a lot harder to handle than any bears you've encountered in the mountains. You need to change your approach to best him in combat, and be more cautious. Steer clear of his axe and watch out for his ground pound. It feels like a real boss battle, as this strange creature is a match for your super-powered Misthios. What's more, if this legend is real, it makes others possible too – hidden truths that Odyssey slowly reveals from this point on. ■

◀ **Last Month**
Final Fantasy VIII
The Sorceress' Parade planted the SeeD for future cinematic JRPGs.

Next Month ▶
Grim Fandango
Manny's reaper journey ends at a greenhouse. Better hope he's got green digits.

NEXT MONTH

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STAR WARS SQUADRONS

Reviewed – we're in the flight seat for EA's impressive dogfight among the stars